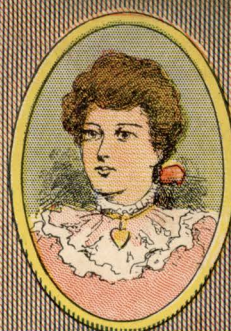


No. 33

5 CENTS

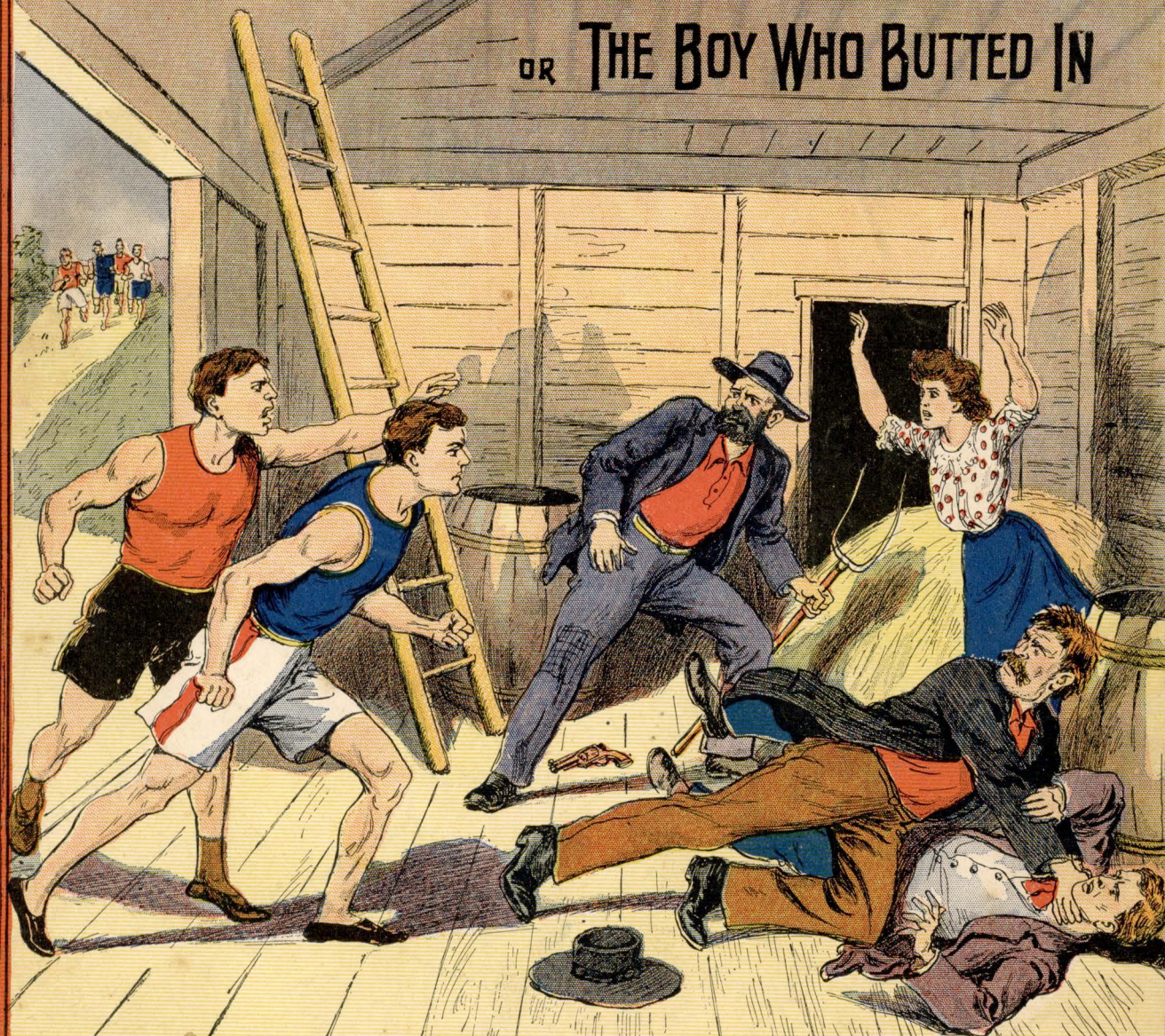


ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY



JACK LIGHTFOOT'S CLEVERNESS

OR THE BOY WHO BUTTED IN



by MAURICE STEVENS

The barn door flew open, and the forms of Jack Lightfoot and Brodie Strawn dashed into the room thus preventing the villains from doing any further harm.

Publishers' Note. "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1905, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by THE WINNER LIBRARY CO., 165 West Fifteenth St., New York, N. Y.

No. 33.

NEW YORK, September 23, 1905.

Price Five Cents.

JACK LIGHTFOOT'S CLEVERNESS;

OR,

THE BOY WHO BUTTED IN.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Jack Lightfoot, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

Tom Lightfoot, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

Ned Skeen, of impulsive, nervous temperament.

Lafe Lampton, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

Kennedy, a constable of Cranford.

Phil Kirtland, formerly Jack's rival in all athletic matters, but who later on declared a truce, and worked with him on the Cranford ball team.

Nat Kimball, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *jiu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

Brodie Strawn, one of the best all-round athletes of Cranford, and who has always been a great admirer of Phil.

Joel Thornberry, a peculiar boy.

Dick Sands and **Sam. Prouty**, a couple of roving bill posters, who try their hands at burglary for a change.

Kate Strawn, a girl Cranford had reason to be proud of.

Nellie Conner, Kate's chum.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOY WHO BUTTED IN.

When the warning came, Jack Lightfoot and Brodie Strawn were out on the hills above Cranford constructing "obstacles."

They were to be the "hares," in a "hare-and-hound" run the next day, and they were trying to make the course difficult, so that the "hounds" who were to pursue them would have anything but an easy time.

The "obstacle" they were constructing at this particular time was a roadway of brush cut from the adjacent trees and thorn bushes, sharp, spiky and thorny limbs and the like, that would hamper the pursuers, and through which they would have to make their way carefully or have their clothing torn.

Of course Brodie and Jack would have to go through this "obstacle" themselves, but they were leaving a little thread of a path through which they could run and while running could kick the brush askew behind

them, making trouble for the "hounds," as the rules of the chase required that the "hounds" should go wherever the "hares" went, even if it was through water or through fire.

Even if the "hares" chose to climb up one side of a tree and down the other—supposing that hares ever do such a thing as climbing—the "hounds" who followed would have to go over that tree also.

When this "hare-and-hound" chase, the second of the season, was first proposed, the idea was for the high school to be pitted against the academy.

The original proposition had come from Phil Kirtland, the leader of the academy boys, and had then been taken up by his athletic club, of which Brodie Strawn was a prominent member. Phil had suggested that the question which school should be "hares" and which "hounds" might be settled by drawing lots, or through some form of athletic contest, the winner to have the choice.

This would have been satisfactory to Jack Lightfoot, the president of the high-school athletic club, and he was willing to accept it.

Yet, in a talk with Kirtland and some members of the academy club, as well as with some members of his own club, he said he believed it would be a better idea to vary the thing, and instead of always pitting high school against academy, to merely pit certain boys against certain other boys, taking them from both academy and high school.

The thought which Jack had underneath all this was, that this pitting of the academy against the high school tended to separate them entirely too much and create antagonisms.

"I want either myself or Brodie to be one of the 'hares,'" Phil had declared, when Jack offered his counter proposition.

"That is all right," said Jack. "Fix that up to suit you. You can both be 'hares,' if you like."

Having gained that point, Phil Kirtland's selfishness showed up again.

"Well, if"—he hesitated—"Brodie, for instance, should be the leader of the 'hares,' how would it be about the leader of the 'hounds'? I suppose you would want that place?"

Jack saw what Kirtland was thinking.

Kirtland wanted leadership there, also.

But Jack had answered, smiling:

"That's all right, too!"

"What's all right?" Phil had then asked. "For you to be leader of the 'hounds'?"

"No, for you to be!"

Phil Kirtland was fairly overwhelmed by this unexpected generosity on the part of his old rival.

"Do you mean it?" he gasped, his face flushing eagerly.

"I said it, didn't I? I usually mean what I say."

And so it had come about that Brodie was to be the "leader" of the "hares," and Phil Kirtland the "leader" of the "hounds."

When this was settled Jack had an air of satisfaction that rather puzzled Phil, who could not understand how anyone would willingly surrender both positions, when, by making a fight for them, he might have had one or the other.

In a good many ways Phil did not understand Jack Lightfoot.

Phil's desires were always personal; the honors and victories he was always seeking were for himself alone. Jack, on the other hand, sought victories for his team, or his nine; or, as in the present case, he sought the victory of a peace that should stop the quarreling and warfare between the academy and the high school. And this he had won, temporarily at least.

Jack and Brodie—a high-school boy and an academy boy—were to be the "hares"; and the "hounds" were to be made up of a number of boys from both schools, led by Phil Kirtland.

It promised an era of good feeling among the boys of the town of Cranford, and that was what Jack Lightfoot desired.

As Jack and Brodie worked, cutting the brush and thorny limbs and piling them as an "obstacle" in the narrow roadway that here entered the woods from the larger road which meandered as a highway over the Cranford hills, they talked of what they were doing, and of the coming "hare-and-hound" chase.

Brodie Strawn, though a fine athlete, a good runner, and one of the best batsmen in Cranford, was of a somewhat sullen disposition and hard to please.

Seldom did anything suit him.

Hence, he was not very well liked even by the boys of the academy, with the exception of Phil Kirtland.

Phil considered Brodie a tiptop fellow and a fine friend, for the simple reason that Strawn accepted Phil's leadership in about everything that came up.

That kind of a follower suited Phil Kirtland better than any other.

Brodie, in nearly every question that had arisen among the Cranford boys, had been opposed to Jack Lightfoot, because he had followed Phil, who was Jack's rival and jealous of Jack's leadership.

But this afternoon Brodie almost forgot that he had ever held a harsh thought against Lightfoot.

He found Jack more pleasant and companionable than he would have believed possible.

Jack was altogether a congenial fellow. Unlike Phil Kirtland, he was not always trying to push himself to the front merely to gain applause. He liked a joke, and he liked fun. He could talk intelligently and well on almost any subject, for he read a good deal and was a bright student.

This afternoon, while they were building "obstacles," Brodie discovered that Jack was willing to take advice, a thing that Phil Kirtland never liked to do. On several occasions Brodie had a good idea concerning the manner of building an "obstacle," and Jack, quick to see it, always accepted it, unless he had something very much better himself.

Brodie sat down by and by to rest, with his back against a tree, while Jack went on piling the brush in the roadway.

He looked at Jack, with more appreciation in his glance than he had ever shown. He knew Jack well—had known him a long time—yet it seemed to him this afternoon that Jack's face was brighter and cheerier and his step lighter and more springy than they had ever been.

The change was in Brodie, not in Jack—Jack was as he had always been.

Brodie noted the clear, blue-gray eyes, the brown hair, the open, manly face, flushed a bit now with exercise, and the handsome, athletic form.

"Don't you ever get tired, Jack?" he asked, feeling his own back aching as he rested it against the tree.

Jack stopped.

"Why, yes, of course. I'm a bit tired now, but I thought I'd lay this pile of brush here before I quit."

"I didn't know," said Brodie; "you work like a steam engine!"

Jack threw the brush into place.

"Well, we've had a lot to do this afternoon, you know; for the race is to-morrow, and we didn't get at these obstacles soon enough. I want to give those fellows the run of their lives to-morrow."

He pushed the brush about with his feet, looking over the "obstacles" critically.

"Jack," said Brodie, the sullen, heavy light having gone wholly out of his dark eyes, "blamed if I don't think I like you better than I thought I did! You're a good worker, and a good leader; and you're never a cad, and never stuck on yourself."

Jack's face took on added color, as he dropped his hands to his hips and met Brodie's gaze.

"I'm glad to have you think so, Brodie. If we've ever been anything but the best of friends it hasn't been my fault."

"No, I——"

But there was an interruption, and what Brodie intended to say was postponed to another time.

A boy came hopping from the main road that ran by this strip of woods, evidently having seen Brodie and Jack.

He carried some posters and lithographs over his arm, and bore in the other hand a brush and a bucket of paste.

"Say," he said, "are you fellers from Cranford?"

"Yes," Jack answered.

"Hoop-la! Well, I thought I was buttin' in at the right place." He put down brush, bucket and posters, depositing them by the side of the obstacle. "Do you know a man in that town named Strawn? If you do, I've come to send him a warnin'."

CHAPTER II.

JOEL THORNBERRY.

The boy who had thus butted in was perhaps sixteen years old. If older than that his face did not show it. There was something in it, though, and in the keen eyes, which told that he had seen much of life, and of the world, and was shrewd and intelligent.

When he mentioned the name of Strawn, Brodie stepped forward.

"My name is Strawn!"

"Fer fair, is that so?"

"That's my name—Strawn, Brodie Strawn; and my home is in Cranford."

The boy broke into a queer laugh.

"Blamed if you look it!"

"Don't try to be smart," said Brodie, somewhat angrily. "You asked about the Strawns."

"Well, this here Strawn that I'm thinkin' of is rich. He's older than you, too, I reckon, for he keeps a store. Air you rich?"

"My father keeps a store," said Brodie, stiffly. "What did you want with him?"

"Well, if you're the son of a rich man that keeps a store in Cranford by the name of Strawn, I've got some hot inflammation for you, all right!"

The boy's manner was so serious, as well as so comical, that Brodie's irritation passed and he laughed.

"I don't think I want any *inflammation*!"

"Oh, ye don't?"

The boy seemed about to pick up the articles on the ground and move on.

"What have you got to tell?" Brodie asked.

"I thought you didn't want any inflammation! When I come to a feller with news that's good for him, and which I'm carryin' at the resk of havin' my coco severed from the other parts of my anatermy, and he tries to be funny with me, why then I jumps the trolley straight off and goes out of biz. If you want this inflammation you can have it. If you don't want it, or think you can make fun o' me, why, I'm gone."

Jack, as interested as Brodie, had drawn near.

"We're anxious to hear what you've got to say, of course," he urged.

The boy looked at Jack with flashing dark eyes.

"Hoop-la! Who ast you to butt in? Is your name Strawn, too? Or is it Buttinsky?"

"My name is Lightfoot."

"Then I'll confine my inflammation to the gent that it belongs to."

He looked steadily at Brodie; and Brodie, returning the gaze, also took note of the boy's general appearance, observing that he was dressed in laborer's clothing, and wore a stained suit of overalls.

"Now, when I tell you this here," said the boy, "you've got to take my word for it, and not ask too many questions. You see what I'm doin'?"

He took up one of the posters and held it so that they could read it.

It was an advertisement of a patent medicine.

"I'm postin' them," said the boy, as he held up the advertisement. "Take that stuff a-plenty and you'll live a hundred years, if you don't die sooner. You don't know me, and you wouldn't if I told you all about myself; but my name is Joel Thornberry, and my business jist now is stickin' posters. There's more fellers than me in the gang, and the other's air scattered round somewhere. Well, to make a short story long, I was walking up to a board wall this afternoon, intending to stick one of these things on it, when I heard some fellers talkin' behind it."

He returned the poster to the pile.

"I'm that curious about anything I don't understand that sometimes I think I'll hurt myself. So, when I heard them men talkin'—they was whisperin' away as if they was enjoyin' secrets—I crept up quietly to that wall and done the listenin' act, while

they didn't think that anything bigger than a bug was within a thousand miles of 'em.

"And that's how I heard it. They was plannin' to rob the store, or the house, of Mr. Strawn to-night. I didn't git to find out if it was the house or the store, though I'm thinkin' it was the house."

"Did you get to see them?" Brodie asked, much interested now.

"No offensiveness, gentlemen; but I reckon I'll have to say I can't answer that."

"Then you did see them?"

"If I did, or if I didn't, don't matter. I've give you the warnin' that I meant to give to somebody belongin' in Cranford, and it's your business to see that this Mr. Strawn gits it. If he captures them fellers to-night, then you can take a look at 'em yourself and decide if they're good-lookin'. It ain't up to me to say."

"I don't suppose you know who they were."

"I ain't sayin' anything about that, either."

Something of skepticism showed in Brodie's dark, heavy face.

"Oh, I was born rich myself," the boy declared, when he observed it; "so you needn't try to put my eyes out by starin' at me, for you can't do it!"

"If this isn't a straight tip, you know you're likely to get yourself into trouble," was Brodie's ungracious statement.

The boy laughed.

"Well, if you ain't the queerest coon I ever tracked up a tree! Here I come with news that orter make yer willin' to fall on me neck and pour thanks over me like a barber sprinklin' a customer wid bay rum, and this is the kind payments you give me. As fur trouble, I've had such cart loads of the truck that I'm used to it. Pap said to me when I left home to go out and make my fortune that I'd be sure to git into trouble. So I've always been ready to stand it, whenever it's come."

There was something in this boy's manner and method of speech that appealed to Jack Lightfoot.

The boy's rather homely face, his calloused hands showing hard work, and his independent air claimed sympathy. He did not fear Brodie in the least. In fact, his manner showed that he considered himself just as good as the son of the richest man in Cranford, even if he did have to work for a living.

"We're much obliged to you for your information," said Jack, desiring to show his courtesy and appreciation.

"Was I talkin' to you?" was the bolt the boy shot at him.

He stooped to pick up his materials.

"If this is true," said Brodie, discovering that he could not deal with this young fellow in any threatening way, "father will be willing to pay you well for it."

The boy straightened up and again looked at him.

"Well, if you ain't even doggoneder than I thought! Did I ask you for money, or the promise of money?"

"No, but——"

"That's the trouble wid you rich fellers. Yer always measurin' things jest by what you think they're worth in dollars." His eyes suddenly twinkled. "Why, I was so infernal rich that I run away from home to git rid of it. I don't need your money. You don't believe that?"

"I don't think I do," Brodie confessed, not knowing how to take this young limb of the advertising profession.

"Well, you needn't believe it, if it hurts you!"

He picked up his bucket.

"My folks was that rich that they gave me diamond rattles to play with when I was a baby. I cut my teeth on a diamond-studded ring. And when I got big enough to walk out, I had two nurses walkin' with me always fur fear some other little kid that wasn't so high toned would git near enough to blow its cheap breath on me. And that's a fact! When I got bigger it was worse. I couldn't play with any of the kids in the neighborhood, 'cause they wasn't good enough for me; and as there wasn't anybody near me good enough, I at last concluded I'd light out and see if I couldn't find somebody that was." He laughed. "I ain't found 'em yit. You think that's all lies. All right, think so, for maybe they air; but I don't want yer money. You couldn't stack up enough money to make me give this warnin', if I didn't think I orter. So long!"

He picked up the other things, then scrambled down to the main highway, and disappeared.

"What do you make of him?" Brodie asked, fairly agasp.

Jack was laughing.

"I think he's about the queerest specimen I ever run up against."

"Do you believe his story?"

"I did, at first."

"At first?"

"I mean until he began to tell all that stuff about his parents being so rich. I couldn't swallow that. And

afterward, seeing the odd way he had of laughing, I didn't know whether anything he had said was true."

"That's the way with me."

"But I'd tell your father if I were in your place, and let him set a watch to-night. If the burglars should come, then he wouldn't be caught napping."

"And that name is odd, too!" said Brodie. "I hardly think it's his real one."

"Joel Thornberry? It does sound odd. Still, it may be his own."

CHAPTER III.

JOEL COMES TO TOWN.

It was late evening, with night just at hand, when Jack Lightfoot and Brodie Strawn returned from the hills.

As they walked up to Brodie's home—for that lay on the way to the Lightfoot cottage—they were surprised to see before them, at the gate, Joel Thornberry.

"Hello!" he said, with an exasperating grin. "Think of devils and you'll hear 'em switchin' their tails. I jist had you two guys in mind, and was waitin' for you."

"That so?" grunted Brodie.

"Glad to see you," said Jack.

"I jist wanted to make sure that this was the house," said Joel, still grinning. "I've heard some more remarks sence I saw you, and I wanted to be handy round here if anything happens to-night. This is the house?"

"This is my home," Brodie answered.

"Feller told me that down the street—said this was the house of Norwell Strawn, an' that he was about the richest old duck in Cranford. Well, that's all I wanted to know. So long! I don't aim to butt in where me company ain't desired."

He turned away.

"Hold on," said Brodie, puzzled. "You wanted something of me, didn't you?"

Joel Thornberry's grin became more expansive.

"Now you're thinkin' of giving me money for doin' a good deed! I won't take it. All these heroes you read about in the papers gits into print that way. They find some rich guy's pocketbook that he's lost with a thousand dollars in it, and he rewards 'em by givin' 'em ten cents. I'm not a cheap two-fer like that. I don't want any money, nor anybody to pat me kindly on the head and tell me I'm a bully boy. No, sir. So long!"

"Hold on," said Brodie again. "Tell me what you did come up here for?"

"To take a look at the crib that the fellers I told you about say they was goin' to crack to-night. Up there by the woods I saw that you wasn't believin' my little narrative for a cent; and so I thought I'd do my further duty by tryin' to see if I couldn't block the thing myself. That's all. So long."

He turned away again.

"Stop!" said Brodie.

But Joel Thornberry walked on.

"Well, he's the queerest ever!" Jack gasped.

"He's crazy, I guess."

"Oh, he's sensible enough; but he's queer."

"Do you believe anything he's said?"

"He knows something, but whether he's told us straight stories I don't know. You'd better warn your father, and keep a watch here to-night."

As Jack went on toward home he saw Joel Thornberry again.

Joel had stepped into a cheap restaurant and was getting something in the way of a lunch.

The singular "warning" given by Joel was in Jack's thoughts throughout the remainder of the evening much more than the coming "hare-and-hound" chase.

Because of this, and for the further reason that he wished to ascertain if Norwell Strawn took any stock in Joel's story, Jack walked up to Strawn's shortly before bedtime.

As he reached the place Brodie came out on the walk; and both he and Brodie again saw Joel, who was strolling slowly along in the shadows of the trees on the other side of the street.

"See him over there?" said Brodie.

"Yes," Jack answered.

"He camped down by that tree about half an hour ago. I saw him, and went over. When he saw me coming he got up and walked on, and I didn't get to speak to him, but he's been past the house several times since. I was by the door there and meant to come out here and hail him, when you came up."

"We'll go on and overtake him," Jack suggested.

"I told father what he said, and he's warned the night watchman, so that the store will be guarded to-night."

"And the house?"

"Kennedy said he'd stroll up here now and then and see if everything was all right. Some fellows have been sticking those medicine-posters up over town this afternoon."

Jack walked on with Brodie in the direction taken by Joel Thornberry.

They met him, after he had gone to what seemed to be the length of his beat and had turned back.

"Hoopla!" he exclaimed, stopping suddenly when he came face to face with them. "I didn't see you, 'count of the trees and the dark; I'd 'a' gone on if I had. I don't want you to thank me for what I'm doin', and my name ain't Buttinsky for a regular thing."

"What are you doing?" Brodie inquired, somewhat testily, for Joel's airy manner rather nettled him.

"Doin' what if everybody would do the world would be happier—my duty!"

"You're going to watch here to-night?" Jack asked, for the thing surprised him.

"You've tagged me first try!"

Brodie looked at him severely, but the gloom was too great to enable Joel to notice this; yet he could but observe the sharp tone in which Brodie now spoke to him.

"The store and the house will be watched to-night. So, you'll not be needed round here!"

The boy stood staring at him for a moment, then said slowly:

"I didn't expect anything else of you, for I took your measure the minute I first met you. But that's all right. Whether you want me to or not, I'm goin' to be holdin' down the earth round here to-night. Ain't no law to stop that, I reckon."

"I begin to think you've got some sort of a game to play yourself," Brodie insisted, not pleased by the reply.

"Think so? Then, keep on doin' it! What you think of me won't trouble my digestion any. I've run up agin' a good many like you in my time, and one extry don't count. I know what I'm doin', and you don't."

This plain speaking angered Brodie.

"I think you're a thief!" he answered. "And I've a notion to ask Kennedy to run you in."

"Who's Kennedy?" the boy asked, coolly, lighting a cigarette.

"He's the night watch and constable."

"If you've notified him, and he attends to business to-night, maybe he'll see somethin' happen. But most of his kind air fatheads, with putty under their skulls instead of brains. So long! No use talkin' with you. I never like to work my breathin' apparatus overtime

when it don't do any good. You're set agin' believin' me. But that's all right! It'll save you the trouble of offerin' me a reward and me the trouble of refusin' it. So long! I like walkin' better than talkin'—with you."

He turned and walked back along the path that led beneath the trees, leaving Brodie breathing hard with suppressed rage.

"I feel like choking him!" he declared.

"Why?" Jack asked.

"For his insolence."

"But if his warning is valuable he has done a good deed, and his desire to see that the house isn't burglarized to-night can hardly be condemned."

"Lightfoot," said Brodie, turning on him sharply, "you almost make me mad! That fellow is playing some game. If there's any burglary attempted here to-night he'll be in it and likely at the bottom of it. He's spotted the house, and maybe he's hanging round to give some sort of signal, or aid in some other way. I feel pretty sure of it."

But Jack did not feel at all sure of it, and he said so emphatically.

Jack was a better character reader than Brodie, and he had seen honesty in the dark eyes of Joel Thornberry and in the boy's whole bearing.

He had discovered that Joel did not like to be patronized, that he disliked anyone who assumed superior airs, and particularly desired to have his own way. More than all, Joel resented even a bare suggestion that he was not conducting himself with honorable intentions. That suggestion Brodie had made, and the boy had been deeply offended.

"I tell you what, Jack," said Brodie, "this whole thing is so queer that I'd like to have you stop with me to-night. There's an extra bed in my room, and I want you to stay over."

"I'll ask mother," said Jack, "and if she consents I will."

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN THE BURGLAR CAME.

Jack was glad of this opportunity to spend the night with Brodie.

This was not so much that he thought he might be needed as because it would give him a chance to get nearer to Brodie than he had yet been able to do.

There was a certain aloofness about Brodie that made it hard for anyone to penetrate the outer shell of his character and become really well enough acquainted with him to gain his friendship.

Jack had accomplished a good beginning that day, and this was a chance to increase the small gain he had made.

"Those Strawns are all somewhat disagreeable," said his mother, when he spoke to her about it.

"Do you believe Kate is?" Jack asked, for he wanted to think well of Kate.

"She's changeable, and I don't like that any too much in a girl. See how offended she was at you when she thought you had caused the death of her terrier!"*

"I couldn't blame her for that," Jack answered.

"No, perhaps not. Well, you may go if you like!"

When Jack reappeared at Strawn's and found Brodie waiting for him in the yard, Joel Thornberry seemed to have disappeared.

At any rate, Brodie reported that he had not seen him for some time.

As they walked along the street together beneath the gloom of the trees, looking for Joel, Jack had a strange sense of exhilaration. There was a hint of mystery here which tingled his blood and stirred his imagination. The dark shadows, the quiet of the sleepy town that had already retired for its night's slumber, the soft stars shining down through the tree branches, the chirping of night insects, created a feeling of romance that was delightful.

Jack did not want to hurry into Brodie's room and to bed, even though the hour was now growing late.

He preferred to walk softly up and down the street with Brodie, talking of Joel Thornberry, of the strange warning, and of the "hare-and-hound" chase that was to come off to-morrow; though, thinking of that race, Jack knew he ought to go to bed, that he might have plenty of rest and sleep, and so be prepared for his strenuous part in it.

Only once did Kennedy come into that section of the

*See No. 14, "Jack Lightfoot, the Magician."

town, and then he did not approach the house, but walked along some distance away and looked at it.

"A lot of good that will do!" growled Brodie. "He didn't even see us here under the trees."

But Jack apologized for Kennedy, who had always been his good friend.

"It's early, and he thinks there's no danger yet. He'll attend to the thing more closely as the night gets later."

"He's no good!" said Brodie, positively.

Brodie had a habit of jumping at conclusions, which often made him do injustice to others.

When they retired at last to Brodie's room, they sat for a time at the window looking out.

A view of a portion of the street could be had from this window, and also a view of the roof of a shed in the yard near by and almost below the window.

Joel was not to be seen, though the darkness beneath the trees was so dense that they hardly expected to behold him even if he were there.

"Do you know what I think?" said Brodie, as he got ready to turn in for the night.

"That Joel Thornberry is still out there somewhere."

"Well, I guess he is. But that wasn't what I meant. I believe he told that to see if he couldn't get a reward of some kind from father or from me. Or, perhaps, he thought if he turned up here with his warning we'd invite him into the house to stay all night. He may be in with the burglars. I shouldn't wonder if he is, and that he hoped to find a way into the house for them by some such trick."

Jack again did not agree with Brodie.

There were two small beds in the room, and Jack occupied the one that was nearer the window.

He fell asleep soon after.

It seemed to him he had not been asleep many minutes, though it was well on toward morning, when the window near him fell with a bang—it had been left open—and at the same moment smothered yells and rapid revolver shots sounded from the shed.

Jack sprang into the middle of the floor at a leap.

As he did so, he bumped into a human form.

Thinking he had stumbled against Brodie, who had been awakened in the same way, he was about to say

something, when a heavy fist struck him in the chest and hurled him against the wall.

That terrific blow almost knocked the breath out of him, and before he could quite recover Brodie sang out lustily:

"Help me here, Lightfoot!"

Two figures were whirling and dancing about the room, and one of them was Brodie.

Sure now that Brodie was having a fight, Jack moved to his assistance, reaching out to get his arms round the neck of the man who was choking Brodie and trying to hammer him in the face.

As Jack pounced on him, the man gave a backward kick to free himself of his new antagonist.

Jack heard Brodie wheezing, and knew the intruder had set his fingers in Brodie's throat.

The man kicked again, as Jack tried to drag him from Brodie, and Jack, catching the outthrust foot, gave it a strong sidewise wrench.

The result was that the fellow tumbled to the floor, with Brodie on top of him.

But he was still clutching Brodie by the throat, and with such effectiveness that Brodie could do nothing but wheeze.

Again Jack laid hold of the man, trying to drag him from Brodie.

The man, a giant in strength, staggered to his feet, swung one arm straight out, and laid Jack on the floor.

But Jack was game.

He heard the man leap for the window, leaving Brodie lying on the floor as if dead.

"Help!" Jack yelled, to arouse the house, as he sprang again at the man.

There was a sound of shattering glass, as the man thrust his foot through the window, carrying away the sash.

Jack caught him by the coat, commanding him to halt.

The answer was a curse and another kick, this time delivered at Jack's face.

But Jack was pluck to the backbone. He gripped the foot and leg, and again tried to throw the man to the floor.

Then a revolver flamed in his face, the report stunning his ears and causing him to lose his hold. For an instant he thought he must be shot.

In that instant, and while Jack was reeling backward, the man hurled himself in wild desperation through the window.

Jack heard him drop to the ground; it was a second-story window, and the drop to the earth was a long one.

When Jack rushed to the window the man was running toward the gate as if not at all injured.

A series of howls was coming from the little shed, and cries and the flashing of lights in various parts of the house told that the family had been aroused.

Jack jumped back to where Brodie lay on the floor.

"Hurt, Brodie?" he asked, anxiously, getting his arms round him and trying to lift him.

"N-no!" said Brodie, as if this call revived him. "I—I think not. Wh-where's that——"

"Gone through the window!" said Jack. "Thank goodness, you're not hurt! I'll strike a light."

Kerosene was used in the house. Jack found the lamp and soon had a light.

Brodie had climbed to his feet, looking red-faced and foolish. Both he and Jack were in their night clothes.

The sounds from the other parts of the house were increasing in volume.

"Hope you're all right, Brodie!" said Jack. "The scoundrel went through the window."

He began to hurry into his clothing.

Scarcely a minute later he took a leap from the window, lighting easily and softly.

Brodie was at the window above, looking out, as Jack scrambled to his feet.

Mr. Strawn came running from a back door, half clad; and voices were heard at various windows.

Then Jack was surprised to see Joel Thornberry appear from the shed, carrying a revolver.

"Hoop-la!" he cried. "What was it?"

Norwell Strawn caught him by the shoulder and threw him sharply to the ground.

"I think I've caught you!" he said, with his foot lifted, as if he meant to deliver a kick.

"Hold on! hold on!" cried Joel. "What you takin' me fer, anyway—a bag of meal? Handle me kindly, handle me gently, or you'll rile my angelic temper."

Brodie Strawn, imitating Jack's example, came sailing down from the bedroom window.

Then Kate and Mrs. Strawn appeared, together with a servant.

Joel Thornberry drew back gingerly, as if he feared Norwell Strawn's foot, then rolled over and began to rise to his feet.

"You can't get away," said Strawn, threatening him.

Joel laughed in a queer way.

"What was that shooting about?" Brodie demanded.

"That was me, I reckon!" said Joel, as if he felt rather foolish about it. "I'll tell you how it was. You know I've been watchin' out fer that burglarious undertakin' that was to be undertook here to-night, and——"

"And the burglar is making tracks all the time!" cried Jack. "Where is Kennedy?"

Kennedy appeared as suddenly as if he had been waiting outside for this summons, and Jack told him what had happened.

"Which way did he go?" he asked, starting toward the gate.

Jack informed him as well as he could.

Strawn, in the meantime, laid hands on Joel.

"I think we've got one of the burglars here, and we'll hold him!"

Joel slipped his revolver into one of his pockets and faced Strawn.

"Governor," he said, in an appealing tone, "don't go to makin' a mistake now! You're makin' a big one. Ask these boys—ask your son there if I didn't come to him with inflammation this afternoon, and warnin' him about this?"

"Is this the boy you spoke about?" said Strawn to Brodie.

"Yes," Brodie answered.

"Well, what have you got to say?" Strawn demanded of Joel.

Some of the neighbors who had been aroused by the

noise and the shots began to arrive, and Jack, standing by the gate, told them the direction taken by Kennedy.

"I've got to say jist this," said Joel, in answer to Strawn's question, "I give my warnin'. These kids didn't want to believe me. But I knowed that my inflammation was straight. So I come up here to do a little watchin' on my own account. I got sleepy and tired after a while and crept into the shed there. Then I dropped asleep. I was dreamin' about the burglars that was a-goin' to burgle, and I thought they was fightin' me. I opened on 'em with my revolver—in my sleep, you see—and that's what made the war music in the shed. I reckon there's about a dozen bullet holes in that shed, and I'm surprised there ain't some in me, for I didn't know where I was shootin'. And, governor, that's the truth, the whole truth, and nothin' but the truth, so help me Joseph!"

His manner was so earnest and altogether so singular, that Strawn was convinced of his innocence.

By the time Joel had finished Brodie was telling what he knew.

Other citizens of the town arrived, and Jack and Brodie joined them in a search for the man who had entered Brodie's room.

The noise this burglar had made in letting the window fall, thus arousing Jack and Brodie, had no doubt blocked his plans. It had, also, frightened away the balance of the gang, if Joel's story that there were others was true.

No doubt the burglar had chosen Brodie's room for his entrance into the house because he saw the window open.

CHAPTER V.

"HARE-AND-HOUNDS."

Joel Thornberry had disappeared.

But the strange warning he had given, his queer words and actions, together with the burglarious entrance of Strawn's house, followed by the attempt of Kennedy and others to catch the housebreaker, was responsible for the excitement that prevailed in Cranford on the Saturday morning set for the "hare-and-hound" chase.

Up to that time the chief interest of the boys of

the town had been given to the coming run of the "hares and hounds." Nothing else had been talked of for a week or more.

Now the "hare-and-hound" chase seemed to be forgotten, and everybody was talking of the burglars and the attempted burglary, and of the boy who had "shot up" the shed at Strawn's.

Gaping crowds came to the shed to look at the bullet holes in the walls.

They counted the holes, and inspected them over and over, and made guesses as to the courses taken by the bullets after they had passed through the boards.

One bullet hole was found in the corner of the house.

"That feller was wilder than a hawk!" said Kennedy, as he examined the bullet marks himself. "It's a wonder he didn't kill somebody, or himself. Strawn ought to have held him. I think if I could git my fingers onto him I could make him tell what he knows."

But Joel was not to be found.

Two of the billposters who had been at work the previous day reappeared and began to stick up their advertisements.

But these two men had spent the night at a well-known boarding-house in the town, and as Kennedy could find nothing against them he did not arrest them, nor even trouble them, more than to ask of them a few questions, which revealed nothing.

Because of the general excitement over the attempt to rob Strawn's house there was not a large crowd present when the "hares" and the "hounds" gathered at the upper end of the fair grounds, near the road, for the beginning of the race.

Jack and Brodie were there, of course, to start off as the "hares."

And Phil Kirtland was there, as the leader of the boys he had chosen for "hounds."

Old Mr. Snodgrass came out in his shining buggy, smiling in great good humor. And a few other business men appeared.

Yet it was so slim a gathering that Phil Kirtland, who liked to have a crowd of admirers about him when an event of this kind was to be pulled off, was undeniably disappointed.

However, the boys looked neat as new pins, in their light running costumes, and were in the pink of condition.

Nearly all of the "hounds" who were to follow the lead of Phil Kirtland had been chosen by him from the academy crowd.

Nevertheless, Jack Lightfoot smiled inwardly when he saw who two of the boys were, these two being Wilson Crane and Jubal Marlin, both of whom Phil disliked.

Wilson was an academy boy, but Phil's enemy at present. Yet Wilson could run like the wind, and Phil knew it. Jubal was a high-school boy, but also a strong, swift runner.

For once Phil Kirtland had laid aside his personal feelings and sought for boys who could run, rather than for boys he liked.

"If he would always do that," was Jack's thought, "he might make a good athletic leader. I guess he is learning a few things!"

"How much of a start do we give these 'hares'?" asked Jubal, speaking to Phil, as the boys gathered.

"Five minutes," said Phil. "That's the agreement."

"By granny, we'll have tew do some runnin' then, if we ever catch 'em!"

"We expect to do some running," said Phil.

The boys were talking over the details of the race for the last time.

The run was to be for five miles. The "hares" were provided with bits of colored paper, which they were to drop now and then in exposed places, so that they could be readily found by the pursuing "hounds."

"Home," or the goal at the end of the race, was to be the house of a certain farmer, whose name was Ingalls. When within a mile of Ingalls' house the "hares" were to throw down a heap of the colored papers, and make a break for this house. The "hounds," when they came upon these papers, were at liberty, also, to make straight for the house at which the race was to end.

If the "hares" reached Ingalls' place first, without being "tagged" on the way, they won; otherwise they lost to the "hounds."

As important as anything, was the rule which re-

quired the pursuing "hounds" to follow the paper trail left by the "hares," no matter what turns it made or where it led them.

Kennedy came down to act as "starter."

"Not a word from those burglars," he said, dejectedly. "Maybe you fellows will see them as you make your run this morning."

He seemed tired.

Brodie Strawn had a strange look on his face as he went with Jack Lightfoot to the starting line and stepped into position, armed, like Jack, with a supply of the colored papers.

"This seems queer, Jack, and no mistake!" he said, in a puzzled tone.

"What does?" Jack asked.

"Well, it never happened before, that I was to stand with you and try to defeat Phil. I hadn't thought of how queer it is until right now. It doesn't seem natural."

Jack did not tell Brodie, of course, that it was just the thing he had worked for.

"We're going to give Phil and his crowd the chase of their lives," he said, brightly.

"Sure!" Brodie agreed, squaring his shoulders. "Now that I'm into it I'm in to win."

"That's the spirit," said Jack; "and you're my leader, you know. You have to set the pace and the course. The rules don't allow me to run faster than you do, even if I could."

Brodie flashed him a look.

"You believe that I'll do the best I can, don't you, even though Phil is the leader of the 'hounds'?"

"I know you will."

"That's good, and I'm glad to hear you say it. For, you see, if we should lose, some fellows might think that I lost because I wanted to favor Phil. Phil's my friend, but I don't let friendship come into a thing of this kind. I'll tell you now, Lightfoot, I'm going to do some running this morning."

Jack did not wear his heart on his sleeve, as the saying is; therefore, Brodie did not know how much satisfaction this gave him; yet Jack had worked for this very thing.

He wanted to gain the good will and friendship of Brodie Strawn and help to break him away from the domination of Phil Kirtland. There was no better way in which it could be done. For once in their school lives Brodie and Phil were to oppose each other in a test of running and skill. The whole thing was a proof of Jack Lightfoot's cleverness.

Jerry Mulligan, the Irish boy, had been chosen to go out to Ingalls' house, and there with a watch take the time of the arrival of each runner at "home."

Jerry was already on his way, and perhaps by this time almost at his destination.

"Time's up!" said Kennedy, holding his watch in his hand, as Jack and Brodie got into place at the starting line.

A few seconds later his voice sounded again:

"Go!"

Brodie and Jack leaped away, while the other boys stood watching them.

Jack kept close at Brodie's side, though just a trifle behind, for Strawn was the "leader."

The boys watched them as they crossed the railroad tracks and entered the wooded hills on the south of the town, where they vanished from sight, running easily, with a certain springy gait that told of great reserve strength.

"They're all right," said Kennedy, with admiration, as they thus passed from sight. "If you fellows catch 'em it will hump you."

He still held his watch in his hand.

Phil Kirtland and his "hounds" lined up at the starting point.

Did you ever notice how slow time seems to pass when you are keeping count of it?

If you never did, get a watch and count off just one short minute by seconds.

You will be surprised to know how long a time a minute really is.

The waiting "hounds" under Phil Kirtland began to grow anxious, when no command to "Go!" came from Kennedy.

"By gravy, the starter's cheatin'!" Jubal Marlin whispered. "Them fellers have been gone ten minutes already, and I know it."

"How much time have we yet to wait?" Phil asked of Kennedy, for, like Jubal, it seemed to him that more than five minutes had passed.

"Still two minutes and forty seconds," said Kennedy.

"Why, it took 'em more'n two minutes to git into the woods!" Jubal declared.

"You just thought so," was Kennedy's answer. "This watch doesn't lie. Now, three minutes are up, and you've still got two minutes. And I don't tell you any more, but just shout 'Go!' when the time comes."

Then the time passed even more slowly.

The boys bent forward, ready to start.

"Oh, it must be more than five minutes!" said Wil-son Crane.

"Kennedy's all right," said another boy, "but surely that five minutes must be up!"

Still Kennedy did not say a word.

"By hemlock, them fellers air more'n a mile from here before this!" Jubal grunted. "We'll never git 'em!"

"Go!" said Kennedy, suddenly, snapping his watch shut.

Phil leaped out with a bound, and started with his followers over the route taken by the "hares" as they ran toward the woods.

Kennedy stood watching them with a smile, noting with admiration the clean and easy manner of their running.

"It's a great thing to be a boy," he said to himself; "yet how mighty few boys know it! They won't know how great it is until they get to be a good deal older than they air now. Boys never do. I didn't when I was a kid, and none of 'em do. They never really understand how fine a thing it is to have health and strength and vigor, until they ain't boys any longer. They always want to be men, instead of boys; but a boy's time is the best time there is in the world. And I wish the lads really knowed it, while they air boys, as well as I know it, now that my boyhood's gone and will never come back again."

A tinge of sadness came into Kennedy's face, as he watched the boys out of sight and then took his way slowly toward the town.

CHAPTER VI.

WITH THE "HARES."

After entering the woods Brodie and Jack turned sharply to the left, climbing up over some precipitous rocks, then headed away for a time in the direction of the Painted Cave.

At short intervals they dropped some of the colored papers, thus marking the paper trail.

After a while they doubled back sharply, and passed along a dry creek basin, coming out on the road to the westward of the town.

As they thus left the woods behind they were somewhat surprised to behold Kate Strawn and Nellie Conner seated there in a buggy.

The girls waved their hands to the "hares."

Brodie stopped, as he and Jack came up to the vehicle.

"I don't know whether you ought to be out here or not," he said, doubtfully.

"Well, we knew, from what you told me, that you would pass along here, and we wanted to see the fun," Kate declared, willfully. "What harm is there?"

"None; only I was thinking of that burglar."

Kate tossed her head.

"Oh, pshaw! He's miles from here before now."

"Yes, I suppose he is," Brodie admitted; "yet it makes me uneasy."

"Brodie Strawn," said Nellie, smiling at him, "can't girls be permitted to have a little fun, as well as boys? You aren't afraid of that burglar, are you?"

"But that's different!" said Brodie.

"I think Brodie is right," Jack declared, smiling at the girls.

"Mr. Jack Lightfoot, tell me if a girl hasn't any rights at all?" Nellie demanded, coquettishly.

Jack flushed.

"Certainly she has; the right to stay where she will be out of danger, and the right to look handsome."

"You're a—flatterer. If I always stayed where there is no danger where would you be now?"

"Dead, likely," Jack admitted, for he could not forget the heroism of Nellie Conner, who had saved his life by standing up in the road before him, when he lay unconscious and hurt, and turning aside a pair of

runaway horses that otherwise would have run over him. And then there was another affair where he might have lost his life by fire only for the heroism of these two girls.

"I'd like to argue this thing out with you," said Brodie, "but I can't; the 'hounds' will be here in a little while."

Jack tipped his cap to the girls as Brodie started, and soon both were lost to the view of the occupants of the buggy.

They had entered the wooded hills again.

Just beyond this point they passed through the "obstacle" which has been already described; and there, near the highway, they beheld Joel Thornberry.

He came toward them, just as on the previous day, only that now he had no package of handbills, nor brush and paste.

"Hoop-la!" he cried. "What you lookin' fer?"

"Nothing," said Jack; while Brodie stared at Joel in a questioning way.

"What ye runnin' fer, then, if you ain't lookin' for anything?"

"We're the 'hares' in a 'hare-and-hound' chase. The 'hounds' will be along here soon."

Jack stopped at the entrance to the obstacle.

"Them 'hounds' ain't dogs?" Joel queried.

"No, they're boys," answered Jack.

"What made you skip out last night?" asked Brodie.

"By the howlin' tomcats, you didn't expect me to stay and be arrested? I stopped that burglary, or done all I could to stop it. I wasn't needed any further, and I hadn't any notion of bein' put into jail, and so I skedaddled. I've been in enough trouble without tryin' to git into more. If that answer don't suit you, come ag'in."

"Do you know what became of the burglar?"

"I don't."

"Nor any of them?"

"I don't."

"But you do know who that fellow was?"

"I didn't see him, did I?"

"You know who those burglars were that you heard planning to break into the house?"

"I don't have to answer that."

"Well, we people in the town feel sure they belonged to that crowd of billstickers you were working with. Only two of the billposters showed up in town this morning."

Joel tried to hide his surprise.

"That so?" he cried. "Seems to me that you have a good deal more inflammation than I have."

"Come to the town this evening, or right after this race is over, and father will be willing to pay you for whatever information you can give."

Joel stared.

"Hoop-la!" he exclaimed. "Didn't I tell you that I run away from home simply because I didn't want riches? I ain't comin' to town, unless I take the notion my own self to do so."

"We can't stay to talk with you," said Brodie. "We must be going, or those 'hounds' will be right on top of us. We've already lost time. But come to town, please, and have a talk with father. I'll promise that you won't be molested in any way, if you do."

He darted, as leader, into the obstacle, with Jack at his heels. As they passed through it they kicked the thorns and sharp bushes into the path behind them; for, in the rules, it had been agreed that the "hares" might make the way as difficult as they could, if they cared to waste the time required to do it.

This obstacle had been so arranged that very little time was lost in the work of making its passage hard for the "hounds."

As they turned away from the obstacle, and found that Joel was running on with them, they entered a ravine. At almost the same moment they heard the "hounds" give tongue behind them, showing that they had sighted the "hares." This "giving tongue" was in the nature of a yell rising from the throats of several of the pursuing boys, notably from the throat of that wild Yankee, Jubal Marlin.

"They'll git ye now," said Joel, who became at once intensely interested. "They see you, and they'll take a short cut acrost and corner ye."

"But they're not allowed to run by sight," said Jack, as he pounded along at Brodie's side.

"Not what?"

"Not allowed to run by sight. The rules are that they must run by scent. That means that they've got to follow the paper trail we're leaving and go wherever we've gone; so they can't cut across just because they happen to see us."

"But they've gained a lot," said Brodie, "and that means that we've got to do some hot running now, as well as some clever dodging and doubling."

He increased his speed, doubled back through the woods out of sight after leaving the ravine, and passed through another obstacle.

Coming to a creek, he and Jack slipped off shoes and stockings, entered the water and waded down it a short distance before crossing to the opposite shore.

Where they thus entered the water they left colored paper, and they also placed some of the same on the bank where they came out.

Yet it was likely that it would take the "hounds" some time to find the point from which the water had been left, and this time the "hares" made good use of, thus again drawing ahead, and contriving for a time to keep well out of sight of the pursuing "hounds."

But Joel had dropped out of the race.

He started well, and for a time kept up with the lithe-limbed "hares." But Joel, while a sinewy chap, had not been training himself for running, and he soon became winded.

The "hares" and the "hounds" had trained especially for such running, and besides that, through the whole winter and spring, and for months even before, they had been putting themselves in condition for all kinds of athletic feats.

Hence the running that so quickly winded Joel Thornberry did not test severely the powers of Brodie and Jack, nor of the boys who followed the paper trail which they left as they passed through the woods and over the obstacles.

CHAPTER VII.

DANGER.

Joel Thornberry and the girls in the buggy were not the only persons who beheld the passage of the "hares"

and the "hounds" through the woods and over the hills of Cranford.

Two men lay in hiding on a high and partially bare hillside, some distance out from Cranford, and not far from the main highway that led westward from the town.

They were rough-looking men, whose clothing showed traces of flour paste; in fact, they were members of the bill-posting party that had come to Cranford the day before, sticking up advertisements of a patent medicine.

One of them was the rascal who had blundered into Brodie's room while trying to make a burglarious entrance of the Strawn residence for purposes of robbery, and had taken that headlong leap from the window.

But the robbery by which he and his confederate had hoped to line their pockets had been foiled. Worse even than that, they had discovered that the town of Cranford was aroused, and that searching parties were out in the woods and on the hills.

The elder of the two, whose name was Sam Prouty, was now swearing volubly and furiously at that nimble youngster, Joel Thornberry, though Joel was not there to hear him.

Before quitting the town, Prouty had discovered that the failure of the burglarious enterprise had come about through the efforts of Joel, who had overheard the plans of these two men and had given them away.

"The dirty little gutter snipe peached!" said Prouty, grunting out his wrath. "If I ever git my hands on his windpipe I'll shut off his steam fer that."

"No use kickin'!" urged the other. "We was too loose with our mouths, that's all."

"Hello, what's that yellin' mean?" Prouty asked, suddenly, standing up to get a better view.

The second and younger scoundrel, whose name was Dick Sands, but who usually was known to his friends as Sandy Dick, also stood up and stared in the direction of the sound.

Thus looking, they saw a pack of boys in light run-

ning costume break from the woods some distance away and come loping in their direction.

"They're follerin' us!" said Prouty.

He dropped a hand to his hip, where in his pocket he carried a loaded revolver.

"Well," he grunted, "if they crowd us they'll wish they hadn't! I don't intend to let no gang of kids take me to back to that town."

"Not on your life," said Sands. "But, look—they're trailin' us!"

"Yes; an' doin' the trick up neat. See 'em, with their eyes on the ground, spellin' out that trail jist as if they was Indians!"

As the two ruffians continued to stare, they saw a buggy being driven rapidly along the road.

Two young girls sat in it; and when they had arrived at a certain point the buggy was stopped, while the occupants sat there, awaiting the coming of the "hounds."

The boys led by Phil Kirtland came leaping along the road, guided by the bits of colored paper now and then visible, which the ruffians on the hill could not see.

When they observed the girls in the buggy Phil and his followers stopped for a moment to toss a sentence or two to them.

And when they ran on, disappearing in the woods again, the girls waved their handkerchiefs encouragingly.

As chance would have it, the place where the "hounds" vanished from the sight of the girls into the woods was where a little ravine dipped down to the road.

Up that ravine Dick Sands and his pal had gone.

Later, though unseen by the burglars, Brodie and Jack had passed up the same way, leaving there their paper trail.

And now the "hounds," hot on the scent, were hastening over the same route.

Sam Prouty and Sandy Dick looked at each other.

"I reckon we'd better hike!" said Prouty, sententiously.

"Yes," agreed Sands, "we've got to pull our freight. They'll be along here pretty soon."

"I'd as soon stop and give 'em a fight, if it wasn't for the noise we'd make. Likely them fellers air armed—must be, or they wouldn't push along that way. They've got grit. Well, now we slide! Come on."

They slid down the other side of the hill; and there, hitting the woods again, they hurried on away from the town.

The route chosen by the "hares" lay along this road, back in the woods most of the time, but always away from the town, in the direction of Ingalls' farmhouse.

That was the natural course for the fleeing burglars to take, and they took it.

They hurried on at a good gait for a couple of miles, concealing their tracks in such a way that they began to feel pretty safe. Up to that time they had not tried to hide their trail, not dreaming that anyone would try to pick it out, nor even believing that such a thing was possible.

Yet they fancied they had seen a pursuing party from the town picking up that very trail. So it became them to exercise more care in their flight.

From another high knoll they took a second survey of the backward way.

"Comin' again!" cried Sandy Dick, with an oath. "We've got to go further than this."

At almost the same time they described, on a further hill, a genuine party of pursuers from the town of Cranford.

Here were more than a dozen men, armed with revolvers and shotguns. They had dogs with them, and apparently these dogs were trying to do some trailing.

As Sandy Dick and his pal looked at this armed party, and again beheld the "hounds" burst into sight again on the road, they were fairly startled.

It looked to be a well-concerted attempt to close in on them from two sides.

"They're comin' this way," said Prouty, when he observed the Cranford men begin to descend the hill in their direction. "We want to travel lively."

Approaching the highway now, for near it they found the walking easier, they saw by the roadside again the buggy with the girls in it.

They stopped, and stood looking at the buggy in hesitation.

"Even got the girls and women out huntin' fer us!" growled Sandy Dick, venting his disgust with another oath. "What's to happen next?"

Prouty seemed about to move further away from the road; then he stopped, with a sudden exclamation.

"What is it?" asked his companion.

"Them girls!"

"I see 'em, but they don't see us. So long's they don't, I reckon their bein' there needn't trouble us."

"But I'm thinkin' of that horse and buggy; and of the girls, too."

Sandy Dick stared. He was not so clever-brained as his pal.

"I don't savvy. Make it plainer, for we've got to be goin' quick."

"What's to keep us from capturin' the girls and the horse an' buggy. We can use the horse and buggy; and we can use the girls for a shield, if we're crowded too close. We can jump into that buggy and drive like the devil along the road, keepin' the girls with us. That will hurry us away from here. If we're surrounded, or crowded, we can say to these Cranford men that we'll kill the girls if they try to take us."

Sandy Dick stared.

This was about the most daring thing he had ever heard of.

Yet it struck him as good. The speed of the horse would be useful just then; and by holding the girls, he and his pal could probably bring the Cranford pursuers to terms.

"All right!" he said, and started toward the road.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW IT TURNED OUT.

Having learned from her brother Brodie that the course of the "hare-and-hound" chase would emerge at certain points into the highroad that ran westward from the town, Kate Strawn, with her close friend, Nellie Conner, had planned to drive along that road, and see as much of the race as they could.

They were seated in the buggy, watching a point

of the road, hoping that the "hounds" they had heard back in the woods would again appear, when two rough-looking men came hurriedly out of the timber into the road.

They looked at the buggy, then passed to the other side of the road as if they meant to walk in the direction of the town.

Nellie Conner's hands trembled on the lines, which at the moment she was holding.

Kate, who was usually more courageous, stared at the men with her clear, dark eyes. She did not like the looks of them, but she was not going to show that she felt fear.

Both girls were well aware that parties of Cranford citizens were out in the hills searching for the burglars, and their immediate thought was that these were the much-wanted men.

"See, how they look at us!" Nellie whispered, while her cheeks paled.

Kate Strawn said nothing, but stiffened in the seat as if for some emergency, while she felt her heart quicken its beats.

"We oughtn't to have come out to-day!" Nellie added.

"They're going on by," said Kate, speaking now. "They won't trouble us."

But no sooner had she said it, when the foremost man, who was Prouty, leaped at the buggy with a cry to his companion.

Nellie screamed.

Kate Strawn, plucking the whip from its socket, struck Prouty a stinging blow across the face.

"Stop that—stop it, or I'll kill ye!" said Prouty, catching her by the arm as she again tried to strike him with the whip.

Both girls now screamed. Kate jerked her arm away, and again sought to use the whip. But she lashed the horse by chance, instead of Prouty.

The horse reared, for Sandy Dick was trying to get it by the bridle. Then, with a wild leap, it started down the road.

Prouty had grasped Kate Strawn, and his hold caused her to be torn from the buggy, as the horse made its frantic jump.

Dick Sands was thrown heavily to the ground, being struck by the buggy wheel.

Kate leaped to her feet, wild with fright, and, screaming at the top of her lungs, started to run.

"Stop there—stop that yellin'!" cried Prouty, darting in pursuit. "Stop it, or I'll murder ye!"

A form came crashing from the bushes into the road.

It was the form of Joel Thornberry.

As Prouty ran in pursuit of Kate Strawn, Joel interposed between the girl and the ruffian.

"Git out o' my way!" cried Prouty.

"I'll attend to him," said Sandy Dick, who had risen to his feet, swearing, though somewhat dazed by his fall and the sudden turn of events.

Joel did not get out of the way, but sprang like a tiger at Prouty's throat.

Prouty stumbled, when thus attacked, and he and Joel fell to the ground together.

"Take that!" said Prouty, striking at Joel's face.

Joel writhed aside, evading the blow.

He caught Prouty by the legs, and tried to hold him down, determined in that way to keep him from following the girl.

Prouty, thrown into a terrible rage, struck again, and this time with greater effect.

But Joel, though that blow covered his face with blood and made him blind and dizzy, hung to the man like a leech.

"Take this, then!" cried the ruffian in a fury, and he struck with a knife.

Joel fell back with a gasp.

Prouty rose to his feet, sheathing his knife in his pocket.

For a moment he stood looking down at the pale face of the boy lying in the road, a pale face splashed with blood.

"I had to do it!" he muttered. "A cuss on ye, why did you pitch in? I had to do it!"

He seemed frightened by what he had done.

Sandy Dick, who had run after Kate, was coming back, dragging her with him.

She screamed and fought; then, her strength giving way, she fell fainting, and Sandy Dick caught her up in his arms.

"What now?" he asked.

Prouty looked up and down the road. No one was in sight.

"No use follerin' that buggy, I reckon?" he said, as if he hardly knew what course to take next.

"You've killed the kid!"

"Yes. I had to do it. He was like a wild cat."

"This whole thing's been a muddle," said Sandy Dick. "And now we've got murder on our hands. Better leave the girl here and slide, hadn't we?"

"Better hold her," said Prouty.

But he still seemed to hesitate, dazed, apparently, because he had the feeling that he had almost unexpectedly become a murderer.

"Well, we've got to be movin'!" grumbled the other.

"We'll keep the girl a while," said Prouty. "Them fellers may surround us. They're on both sides of us now. I heard one gang right up there a while ago."

"And them screams will bring 'em."

"Yes," Prouty admitted. "We'd better be goin'."

Then they vanished into the undergrowth, taking with them the unconscious form of Kate Strawn.

CHAPTER IX.

JOEL AS A TRAILER.

Brodie Strawn and Jack Lightfoot, representing the "hares," had passed on beyond this point some time before.

Phil Kirtland's crowd, who were the "hounds," were making too much noise as they crashed along in their pursuit to hear the screams made by the girls, and were also at the moment too far away.

Apparently, the chances that Kate Strawn would be quickly rescued from the scoundrels who had taken her in charge were not, therefore, good.

Yet there was a very ingenious young person, possessing all the recklessness of the dare-devil and all the bravery of a hero, who, coming to himself just then, in the middle of the road, looked, and saw Kate vanish into the leafy screen of the woods with her captors.

That young person was Joel Thornberry.

Joel stared hard, when he opened his eyes and saw that; then he sprang to his feet.

"Hoopla!" came his characteristic exclamation. "I reckon I've been purty well knocked out."

He did not stop to say more, but moved toward the woods, hopping softly across the road and into the bushes.

"The other girl's gone, and the buggy's gone, and——"

He looked down at himself, for it suddenly occurred to him to take stock of his condition.

He observed that his hands and clothing were bloody, and when he put his hand to his face he found that his nose was bleeding.

"Cree-icky!"

He felt himself over softly.

"I recollect now that feller drove at me with a knife; but he didn't—no, he never touched me! Hoopla! Yes, he run his knife through there! I reckon I fainted."

He had found the slit in his coat, between the arm and the body, through which the knife had gone, just grazing the flesh.

"Cuttin' awful close to the epidermis! But a miss is as good—yes, it's better than a mile; for it makes you feel powerful thankful that you're still livin', even if your nose is sore! Well, here goes!"

He burrowed into the undergrowth, and began to follow the men who were bearing away the unfortunate girl, being able to tell the course they were taking by the swish of a bough now and then and the soft thudding of retreating feet.

"I wonder what ever become of that other girl? But, anyway, they ain't got her, and that's something. I didn't allow I was herding with such a lot of wolves as these fellers air turnin' out to be!"

He hurried on, wiping the blood from his nose on his handkerchief from time to time, as he sought to stop the bleeding, but not once dropping the pursuit.

He had no well-defined plans. The only thing he felt he could do was to get as near to these men as possible, and then lie low and wait some opportunity to get the girl away from them. He was wholly disinterested in this, even though he had seen that the girl was the same who had come into the yard at Strawn's the previous night.

By and by, having crossed through this strip of woods, the two men came out upon an open field, and halted there before venturing further.

Joel now crept near enough to them to see the girl and to hear something of what the men were saying.

Kate Strawn had recovered consciousness.

She was standing by the fence, between Prouty and Sandy Dick. Her face was pale and her dark eyes were big and bright. She had been crying, Joel thought, but there were no tears in her eyes now. Joel was sure he had never seen such a face, for the girl was terrified, desperate, hysterical and altogether in a dreadfully nervous state, yet she was beautiful, with something very proud and even queenly in her attitude.

"She's got grit!" was Joel's conclusion. "Gee! That girl would fight like a wild cat, or howl like a hyena, if it was up to her to do so. And she's powerful pretty, too. I reckon I'm fallin' in love with her. It will be according to Hoyle, if I can git her away, fêr her to marry me to pay me for it. That's the way they always do, in stories."

He chuckled humorously; and then slipped nearer, wondering how he was to begin his work of rescue.

There was no immediate way.

"I've got to keep out of sight," he said to himself, "and work this thing on the dead Q T. If they savvy that I'm hot after 'em instead of layin' dead out there in the road, the chances air that I'll be real dead 'fore many minutes."

The men, after a few words, climbed the fence, and forced Kate Strawn to mount it with them.

Then they moved along the fence in the direction of another strip of woods.

As Joel slipped to the end of the timber they had thus quitted he heard the "hounds" bellowing in the hills some distance away, where they had come across some of the bits of colored paper.

Joel's bloody lip curled in a sneer.

"I wonder what they'd think if they knowed there was something more important than 'hare-and-hounds' goin' on now? They'd be in a cold flutter, I guess. Well, I ain't got time to carry this piece of inflammation to 'em. If anything's done I got to do it myself, I reckon."

Joel writhed through the fence, dropped into a ditch, and began to creep along after the two men and their prisoner.

"I'll play I'm Pizen Pete, the detective from Dead-knock, or Zink-toothed Tim, the trailer from Hacken-sack. Hoopla! This kinder makes yer nerves draw up into little kinks, to know that if them guys git a look they'll maybe sling lead down into this trench. Down, you camel-back; lay so low that they can't see ye!"

Joel Thornberry lay so low in making his passage through the ditch that when he came to the woods into which Prouty and Sands had entered they had gained so much the start of him that he did not even know the direction they had taken. He had secured his own safety, but apparently he had lost sight of the quarry.

Nothing daunted, he began to look for their tracks, and he found them, in some soft soil; and then, taking note of the direction, he hastened on, satisfied that they were not so far ahead of him but that he could overtake them in a short time.

CHAPTER X.

"HARE-AND-HOUNDS."

As Brodie Strawn and Jack Lightfoot came near to the Ingalls farmhouse they executed what they fancied would prove to be one of the cleverest tricks of the run.

Here was a long and narrow lane, beginning in a belt of woodland and ending in another woodland.

In looking the route over they had seen this lane, and felt sure it would be a most natural supposition that anyone entering it would continue to the other end.

At the entrance of this lane, they therefore dropped some of the colored paper. But they did not go into the lane. Instead, they moved off a few feet to the right, and there placed some more of the colored paper, so that it would be within plain view, or at least not difficult to see, from the mouth of the lane.

Then they ran on a few yards, dropping here and there bits of paper to make a plain trail, and then dumped down all of the colored paper they had left.

When they had done this they started straight at top speed for "home," which was the Ingalls farmhouse.

They knew that the "hounds" were close upon them,

for they had heard an occasional yelp from Jubal and others of Phil Kirtland's pursuing party.

The rather long run from Cranford had been made in good time, but both Jack and Brodie had so husbanded their strength that they were not very tired, nor much blown. In fact, they were good for another five-mile run, if it had been required.

They kept well out of sight of the "hounds" now, for they did not want the others to see them, and possibly be thus put in possession of the fact that deception had been used at the mouth of the lane.

Leaving the forest now, with it behind them for a screen, they hastened in a straight course for the farmhouse.

"Oh, this is dead easy!" said Brodie. "They'll lose half a mile going through that lane. Then they'll lose more time trying to pick up the trail at the wrong end; and after that they'll have to retrace their way."

But—Brodie and Jack were both mistaken.

Phil Kirtland's eyes were keen, and so were the eyes of his followers, and they were expecting tricks.

They saw the colored papers off at one side of the lane. There they picked up the trail at once, and following it they came soon to the bunch of "sign," which told them that it was now a free-for-all race for the Ingalls farmhouse.

The distance was about a mile, and Jack and Brodie were a quarter of a mile ahead and screened by the trees.

When Jack and Brodie came out of the woods, striking across the meadow that lay there, they were surprised to behold Jerry Mulligan, with three or four of the men from Cranford.

"You were to stay at the farmhouse and take the time of the arrivals of the runners," said Brodie, almost angrily.

"Whoosh, now! I lift me watch with Ingalls himself, bedad, an' he'll toime ye in. There's more than 'hare-and-hounds' be doin' in these woods we think."

"We heard a girl, or a woman, screaming over here somewhere," said one of the men. "Jerry heard it, too, and that's why he's with us."

"Oh, it was a wild cat, or something of that kind," said Brodie. "Come along, Jack!"

"You didn't see anything of them burglars?" asked another man.

"No," said Jack.

"Well, they're out this way. They've been seen once or twice, and each time they was headin' in this direction."

"You don't think that scream had anything to do with them?"

"We don't know. We're goin' to look through the woods."

"We'll come and join you, just as soon as we've made the run to the house," said Brodie. "There isn't any girl or woman out there."

"But Kate and Nellie were somewhere on the road," Jack reminded.

"Yes, away back, halfway to Cranford."

"They oughtn't to have come out," declared the man.

"An', bedad, ye're roight there; ut ain't no toime for gurruls and women to be dhrivin' round, with thim murdherin' crathers in the woods!" said Jerry.

Jack stood in hesitation.

It would be easy for him and Brodie to win the "hare-and-hound" race now, yet, if anyone was in danger, or needed help, he was ready to abandon the affair and go to that one's aid.

Just then Jubal's yell rocked the air behind them.

Brodie started.

"They've picked up the trail; they didn't go through that lane; yes, and there they are, cutting across that field!"

He pointed to Phil Kirtland and his followers, who had broken from the woods some distance below and were running toward the farmhouse.

"Come, or they'll beat us yet!" cried Brodie, starting off at a sharp gait.

And Jack, whose business it was to follow his "leader," struck in at his best pace right behind.

Jack and Brodie had loitered in the woods, and had lost time talking with Jerry and the men from Cranford. They had been so sure the "hounds" would be led astray at the mouth of the lane that they had not felt haste to be necessary.

In that crowd of "hounds" were some fine runners, and none of them better or faster than Wilson Crane,

whose long legs took him over the ground with almost the speed of an ostrich.

Kirtland was also a good runner, and he forged to the front in a great burst of speed when he saw that the "hounds" now had an even chance with the "hares."

Jubal's yell echoed again.

And then the race for "home" was on, with the distances to be passed over so nearly of equal length that the winning of the race was merely a matter of sharp, clean running.

"Go!" cried Jack to Brodie. "I'm with you, and you can't go too fast to suit me."

CHAPTER XI.

"PIZEN PETE."

"Hoopla!"

Joel Thornberry was still trying to imagine himself a great detective engaged in the task of running down a pair of crooks.

The danger was real and great enough, and Joel was showing no mean skill in his self-appointed work.

After entering the woods, he soon came again in sight of Prouty and Sands, who were dragging Kate Strawn along by the arms.

She seemed more dead than alive, and the sight of their inhumanity aroused Joel's indignation to the highest pitch.

He drew out the little revolver he carried in his hip pocket, which Prouty had not disturbed when he left Joel for dead in the road.

"I'd like to take a pop at 'em, but I reckon it wouldn't be divisible!" he muttered, as he swung along with the weapon in his hands. "Jist the same, if one of 'em jumps at me again he gits this here lead pill, and I hope it will make him so sick he'll die. Gee! if I could only git some inflammation of this business to some of them fool 'hares and hounds!' It's all well enough to play that you're a rabbit or a dog, but jist now there's somethin' more importanter."

The two ruffians kept well within the woods, for they did not want to be seen.

The woods bent here like a crescent, and, following it up, they went in the direction of the farmhouse which

was the "home" of the "hare-and-hound" boys, though this they did not know.

But Prouty and Sands saw that the woods ran up to the rear of the barn which stood some distance back from Ingalls' house.

Coming at length to the end of the woods—which placed them behind the barn, with the barn between them and the house—they discovered that if they went further they would be forced to cross some extensive open fields.

This they did not wish to do. On one side and not far away was visible a road, and from the barn a lane ran to it.

Then the thought of using the barn for a place of concealment came to the hunted men.

"We're goin' into this barn, miss," said Prouty, speaking to Kate. "If you go along quiet we won't hurt you. We don't intend to hurt even a hair of your head, but air jist holdin' you as a sort of club, you see, to keep back your friends with."

"I won't go in there!" she declared, stubbornly.

"We'll tie ye and carry you in, if you don't go peaceable."

"I won't go. I'll scream!"

And scream she tried to do, as she had more than once done before; but in this instance the scream was stopped by the heavy hand of Prouty, placed over her mouth.

She fought and struggled as well as she could, and then, seeing that they meant to tie a dirty old handkerchief over her mouth, she desisted.

"I'll go," she said, with a meekness that they were afraid to trust.

"So help me," Prouty panted, for the struggle had winded him, "if you holler ag'in, the handkerchief goes into yer mouth as a gag!"

Then she submitted, and was conducted to the barn and into it.

But when she beheld the gloomy interior, fear of these men overcame all else. She began to fight vigorously with Prouty, who held her, and tried again to scream. But his hand was again over her mouth, and with curses he jerked along over the floor and flung her down senseless on a heap of hay.

"I've a notion to finish you!" he grumbled, as he looked at her.

Dick Sands had run to a crack on the side of the barn that was next the house, and, applying his eye, looked out to ascertain if the girl's smothered scream had been heard.

A dog was barking in the yard, and a farmer stood by the door.

But the attention of neither man nor dog was directed toward the barn.

He turned back, therefore, looking keenly about to discover a safe place in which he and his chum could hide.

"If them Cranford men surround us here, one of us can poke out his head and tell 'em that we've got this girl and we'll kill her if they crowd us!"

Yet he did not feel easy about it.

He was a somewhat slow-witted chap, who had been drawn into the attempted burglary by his friend Prouty. He was now being led by Prouty, and was trying to think that it was all right. Yet he was strangely uneasy, as he looked at the girl lying on the hay.

"See anything?" Prouty grunted.

"Farmer out there, with a dog!"

Prouty fairly jumped, and began to tug at the revolver in his pocket; whereupon Sands laughed.

"Oh, he don't know we're in here! He's standin' by his door lookin' across the medder. His dog's barkin' at a cat, I reckon."

Then the sound of buggy wheels was heard in the lane.

"See what that is," commanded Prouty, advancing toward Kate. "We've got to find a place in here to hide."

Dick Sands went to the side of the barn that was nearest the lane, and, finding there another crevice, peered out once more.

"Jee-imony!" he cried. "It's the girl that was with this girl. She's in the buggy again, and——"

There was a wild yell behind him, and Sands turned, to see Joel Thornberry spring into the barn and throw himself with fierce recklessness at Prouty.

Prouty was the one who had yelled, and his yell

was of fear, when he saw Jo Thornberry's head appear in the doorway.

Prouty would not have uttered that yell for anything, but it was drawn from him by the sight of that head, bloody and wild-looking—the head of a boy whom he believed to be dead.

Joel had almost forgotten that his face was covered with blood.

He had crept up to the barn door and looked through. He saw Kate Strawn lying on the hay on the barn floor. He also saw Prouty put his hand to his hip pocket, where his revolver was, and heard him say to Dick Sands:

"We've got to find a place in here to hide."

Seeing the action, and hearing those words but imperfectly, Joel Thornberry believed that Prouty was going to kill the girl, and that what he spoke of was a place in which to hide her body.

The gleam of the revolver in Prouty's pocket he believed to be the gleam of the knife with which the villain was to do the murder.

There was a streak of reckless heroism in Joel Thornberry, as he had already shown. He determined to stop that murder.

"Here goes Pizen Pete to the rescue!" he whispered, and jumped through the doorway.

As stated, his appearance was greeted by Prouty with a yell of fear.

That yell roused Kate Strawn from the swoon into which she had fallen.

Prouty tumbled backward across the hay, though not falling, and tried to get out his knife, as Jo Thornberry dashed fearlessly at him.

Seeing that, Joel pitched up his hand, holding the little revolver, and its sharp report would have cut the air, but he fell headlong, tripping himself, and the revolver dropped out of his fingers undischarged.

Knowing now that he had a real live and very daring boy to deal with, instead of a spook, Prouty regained his nerve.

"Kill him!" he whispered, speaking to his pal, who had left the crevice through which he had seen the buggy and was moving toward Joel. "We'll do up the job this time for certain."

CHAPTER XII.

HOW NELLIE BROUGHT THE NEWS.

Brodie Strawn and Jack Lightfoot were racing across the meadow at top speed against Phil Kirtland and his "hounds," each trying to be first at the farmhouse.

The farmer stood smiling in the front yard, watch in hand, ready to note the exact time of the first arrival; while the dog at his side barked in excitement, as it beheld those boys running toward the house.

Dick Sands had seen the farmer and the dog, but had not noticed the lithe-limbed young runners whose feet made hardly any sound on the soft meadow grass. If he had seen them he would have had something even more exciting to recount to his friend Prouty.

"Boys will be boys!" said the farmer, laughing, and speaking to his wife, who had come to the door. "Dad-gast if I wouldn't have enjoyed a race like that when I was a youngster! I'm bettin' on that one off on the right there. He's goin' tew git in first, if that heavier-built feller don't beat him."

By which Ingalls meant that the chances of Jack and Brodie were best, in his opinion.

Almost as he said the words he heard the rattle of buggy wheels. The dog began to bark more loudly, and ran in the direction of the lane. Then the farmer and his wife saw Nellie Conner drive through the lane, and send the horse on past the open gate that led into the meadow.

They saw her give the horse a sharp cut with the whip and wave her hand to the boys.

"She's a pert thing!" sniffed Mrs. Ingalls. "'Tain't no way fer a girl to take sich interest in what boys air doin'. Nobody thought it was nice fer 'em to, when I was a girl."

But the old farmer only laughed grimly.

"Girls will be girls, same as boys will be boys! I kin remember, Samantha, some owdacious things you did yerself when you was a little snip of a thing in calico and I was courtin' ye."

Nellie Conner drove the horse furiously across the grass; and then, standing up in the buggy before she reached the boys, she shouted loudly.

The fact that Kate Strawn was not with her, and

her emphatic and excited manner, told Jack and Brodie that something was wrong, and they thought instantly of the burglars.

A few yards more of sharp running, which, however, would have consumed precious moments, would have given the race to Jack and Brodie.

Nevertheless, they turned toward the buggy, instead of continuing on toward the house.

And for them the race was lost; for Phil Kirtland and most of the boys with him hurried on at top speed, eager to win.

"Kate—Kate——" Nellie was gasping, as Jack and Brodie came up to the buggy.

"What about her?" Jack asked, seeing that she was greatly agitated and frightened she could hardly speak.

"The—the burglars, they——"

The further answer came in a wild scream from the barn.

"Kate! Kate!" Nellie screamed, putting her hands to her head. "That's—that's her!"

The scream rang out again.

Then a revolver crashed.

Jack and Brodie ran toward the barn.

They were much nearer to it than either the farmer or Phil Kirtland's crowd, having been brought near to it in their run toward the buggy.

With difficulty Nellie Conner turned the buggy about and drove in the direction of the barn, following Jack and Brodie.

She was trembling so that she could hardly sit upright; yet she nerved herself to hold the lines, and again plied the whip.

CHAPTER XIII.

WITHIN THE BARN.

What was happening in the barn?

When Joel, rushing bravely to the protection of Kate Strawn, stumbled and fell headlong to the barn floor, thus knocking the revolver from his hands, Prouty jumped at him, seeing now that he was not a ghost at all come to haunt him, but a strenuous and determined boy.

Prouty's first effort was to get hold of Joel's revolver.

Joel, however, was as lively as a cat; and, though he had not yet regained his feet, when he saw Prouty reach for the revolver, he struck it with his shoe and sent it spinning along the floor.

Then Joel and Prouty mixed in a desperate fight.

Joel had only risen to his knees, and Prouty's rush bowled him over again; but as he went down Joel caught the man by the legs and pulled him down on top of him.

Dick Sands dashed, with an oath, to the assistance of his friend.

Kate Strawn, who had recovered her senses, saw this, and saw that the boy was in danger of being killed.

There was a good deal of sturdy and heroic fiber in Kate Strawn. Though she was trembling like a leaf, and her instincts were to make a dash now for liberty, she would not desert the boy who had so bravely come to her help.

A pitchfork lay on the hay, and, seizing it, she swung it at Dick Sands.

The tines came down on his head with a clatter and force enough to make his head sing.

This assault from Kate turned him toward her.

She lifted the fork, tried to scream, and again struck at him.

The tines raked his arm, but he caught the fork with his right hand and with a violent wrench took it away from her.

He had now all the appearance of a desperate man, who could be fiendish if driven to it.

"I'll kill you!" he cried; and for an instant it seemed that he meant to run her through with the tines.

But a cry from Prouty, who was having all he could do with the boy, drew Sands from the girl.

Sands took the fork with him, and Kate looked round, wild-eyed, for a weapon.

Joel was making a stiff fight. He had secured a grip of Prouty's throat, and Prouty was half strangled, being unable as yet to break the hold.

"Let me git at him," said Sands; "I'll settle him!"

Kate screamed in horrified fear as Sands lifted the fork.

Then, seeing the revolver lying on the floor where Joel had kicked it, she sprang toward it and caught it up.

It had been cocked when Joel lifted it against Prouty.

Kate whirled round with it, poking it straight out from her and pointing it at Sands.

She hardly knew that she pulled the trigger, but the crash of the weapon sounded instantly.

Sands dropped the pitchfork and clapped his left hand to his arm, which had been shattered by the bullet.

His mouth dropped open, and he stood thus, staring in amazement at the girl who had turned the revolver on him. His slow wit seemed unable to take in what had happened.

The revolver fell with a clatter from Kate's nerveless fingers, when she saw what she had done; but a cry from Jo Thornberry nerved her again.

Prouty had removed Joel's grip from his throat, and now in turn catching Joel in the same manner, he hammered the boy's head back on the floor, choking him at the same time and drawing that cry from him.

Kate seemed hardly to know what she was doing, but she again sprang toward the pitchfork as if she meant to use it as a weapon and go to Joel's aid.

Dick Sands interposed, planting himself between her and the fork.

"No, ye don't!" he gritted.

Then he glared at her, as she recoiled, while Joel struggled fiercely with the man on the floor.

"You're a she wild cat!" he sputtered, holding up his broken arm. "See that! I'll kill you fer that yit!" he said, slowly.

Then the barn door flew open, and he turned again, thinking to see there the face of the farmer he had beheld in the yard.

He saw, instead, Jack Lightfoot and Brodie Strawn.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CAPTURE.

Kate Strawn screamed again, as if stricken with hysteria, when she beheld Jack and Brodie.

Seeing that he and his pal were in a trap, Dick

Sands temporarily forgot his broken arm and his desire to revenge himself on Kate, and sidling along the wall made a dive for the door through which the boys had appeared, and which now stood open.

"Stop!" shouted Brodie.

Sands swung at him with his good left hand.

Brodie dodged and ducked, and then he and Sands came together.

Jack sprang toward the forms struggling on the floor, and, as he did so, Prouty leaped to his feet.

Seeing that the barn had been invaded, and believing these invaders were members of the Cranford posses, he pulled his revolver from his pocket and ran toward the other end of the barn, looking for an exit.

Jo Thornberry lay on the floor as if dead, having been severely choked by the now frightened ruffian.

Kate had dropped, trembling, to the heap of hay, almost too weak to move.

Disregarding these two, Jack Lightfoot gave chase after Prouty, crowding him hard, as the rascal sought for a door or window by which he could escape.

"Halt!" Jack shouted.

He had caught up a shovel as he passed along, and now swung it as a weapon.

Hearing him right behind him, Prouty wheeled round as if on springs and fired almost point-blank.

Jack threw up the shovel, an instinctive movement to cover his face, and the bullet struck it and glanced off harmlessly.

Prouty tried to fire again, seeing that the first shot had not taken effect, but the shovel sailing through the air struck him heavily on the arm and shoulder, knocking him down.

Before he could rise, or could lift the revolver, Jack was on him.

Prouty's hand, holding the revolver, was wavering up in an effort to fire another shot.

Jack gave the arm a heavy kick with the toe of his running shoe, sending the weapon flying, and then hurled himself on the prostrate man.

The crashing manner in which he came down knocked Prouty backward to the floor, laying him prostrate.

He tried to get at his knife, but Jack caught his knife hand, putting his knee on it to assist him in the hold. Then he buried the fingers of his right hand in the muscles of Prouty's throat.

But the victory over Prouty was not won by any means.

He was strong and athletic, and he felt that he was fighting for his liberty and perhaps for his life; while Jack, though a clever athlete and marvelously strong and quick for his years, was after all only a youth, a stripling compared with Prouty.

Prouty tried to dislodge the choking fingers from his throat, and, failing in that, began to get up, lifting Jack bodily.

It was somewhat like a large animal rising with a smaller one clinging to it in a deathlike grip.

"Help, here!" Jack shouted, fearing that Prouty would get the best of the fight.

Brodie Strawn, having choked and pounded Dick Sands into a condition of inoffensiveness, came leaping to Jack's assistance.

Hearing him running across the barn floor, Prouty made a final desperate effort to break away from Jack Lightfoot.

But Jack clung like a leech; though Prouty, rising, swung him round in a wild attempt to free himself.

"Hang to him!" yelled Brodie.

Then, with another bound, he reached Prouty, and with a blow of his heavy brown fist sent him reeling to the floor, with Jack still clinging to him like a bulldog.

The door was again thrown open, and the farmer and his wife, with Phil Kirtland and the other boys, came rushing into the barn.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

Sam Prouty and Dick Sands were outside of the barn, sitting against the wall in the warm sunshine.

Ringed in were the boys of Cranford, while the party of men who had been seen in that vicinity came hastening along the lane, aware now that the capture of the two burglars had been effected and that they were at Ingalls' barn.

The girls, Kate and Nellie, were in the house, where they were being cared for by Mrs. Ingalls, who no longer thought that Nellie was a "pert young thing," but a girl worth knowing and admiring, for she understood now just what Nellie had done.

Nellie was telling the story again, for the benefit of Mrs. Ingalls and Kate.

"When the horse ran away I was so frightened I could do nothing. But after a while I stopped him; and then I turned him round in the road and drove back to where we had been attacked by those horrid men.

"When I discovered that Kate was gone I was simply crazy. I called and shouted, and if anybody heard me I got no answer.

"I hardly knew what I was doing then, but I turned the horse again and drove back up the road. As I did so, I saw some of the boys off at the edge of that woods over there. I shouted to them, and when they didn't hear me I was about to leave the buggy and try to reach them by running through the woods.

"But I saw a lane further up which I thought led in the same direction, and I drove to that. It was this lane out here. And—well, I guess you know the rest."

Kate's condition seemed to Mrs. Ingalls to be the most serious. She had the appearance of one thoroughly exhausted. Her face was frightfully pale, and she was so still, so nervous, she could hardly stand.

Yet Kate had made a great fight—she would not have believed she could have done so much herself; and that and the terror she had gone through had shattered her nerves for the time.

"Oh, it was brave of you—brave of you!" said Mrs. Ingalls, bustling about in her efforts to make the girls comfortable.

"I wonder what they'll do with those men, now they've got them?" Nellie asked.

"Well, they ought to hang 'em!" Mrs. Ingalls snapped. "Such men ain't fitten to live."

Out by the barn the boys were questioning their prisoners.

"The only thing we're guilty of, and the only thing we admit," said Prouty, doggedly, "is that we made a

fool break in taking that girl. But we thought that you fellers was chasin' us, and we allowed if we held the girl and you crowded us we could bring you to terms, mebbe. We didn't commit any burglary, nor try to. That's all a mistake. We calculated you fellers thought we was tramps, and so was tryin' to catch us."

"But why did you leave town?" said Jack. "Why did you quit that gang of billposters you were working with yesterday?"

"We quit because we was tired of the job," said Prouty.

"But here's a piece of inflammation for you," cried Jo Thornberry, thrusting himself forward. "I heard you fellers yisterday talkin' about robbin' Strawn's house."

Joel's face was still bloody, for he had not taken time to clean away the blood.

Prouty shifted uneasily. He saw that his answers would not hold water.

"You're the devil that's responsible for this whole thing!" he shouted.

"An' you tried to kill me—more'n once you tried to kill me!" Joel shouted back at him.

"It's a pity I didn't succeed," said Prouty, defiantly. "You're nothin' but a mean liar. Everything you've said is a lie."

"You wasn't talkin' about robbin' Strawn's house?"

"No."

"Nor robbin' anything?"

"No. It's a lie; all a lie."

"Hoopla!" cried Joel, moved to admiration by the man's effrontery. "You're a good one. If Barnum was still livin' he'd be lookin' fer you fer a curiosity."

"Don't feel too gay!" grunted Prouty. "I'll be free ag'in one of these days, and I'll take the trouble then to make this world mighty interestin' for you!"

Dick Sands was saying nothing.

His arm had been bandaged and was now supported by a handkerchief looped into a sling. Yet it pained him, and he felt depressed and filled with troubled fear.

He had, in his slow-witted way, permitted Prouty to run things, to take the lead, while he merely followed. And now he saw what trouble Prouty had got them into.

While the boys were questioning their prisoners, whom they had bound, the searching party of men arrived at the barn.

They were astonished, and loud in their praises of the boys who had done such clever work.

"Here's the boy we have to thank for the most of it," said Jack, patting Joel on the shoulder. "Here's a boy who has more clean grit than any other I've ever seen."

"Count in yerself," said Joel. "If my recommendation ain't out of kelter you did some wild-cat fightin' yourself."

"We'll take the prisoners to Cranford in my old wagon," said Ingalls.

"First thing I need is a doctor!" reminded Dick Sands. "Don't fergit that I've got a smashed arm."

"We'll not forget it," Jack promised. "There are some good doctors in Cranford, and we'll have one of them for you as soon as we get there."

"Who won the race?" now asked one of the Cranford men.

"The 'hare-and-hound' race?" said Phil Kirtland, like a flash. "We did! The 'hounds' won this time. I was first in, and Wilson Crane was right at my heels."

"And what time did ye make it in?" the man inquired.

"Well, that's what we don't know. Mr. Ingalls was to keep tab on that, but when this trouble broke loose here in the barn he forgot about it, so no one knows just what time we did make. But it was pretty good, all right; I'm sure of that."

* * * * *

"Jack," said Brodie, as he walked back to town with Jack Lightfoot and some of the other boys, finding himself alone with Jack at one point on the road, "I want to say to you how much I think of you for what you did to-day. Kate will never forget it, either; nor any member of our family."

"That's all right," said Jack, flushing when he heard these words. "I'd do it over again, and I didn't do any more than I should have done. You know that. You were just as brave as I was."

"But it was my sister," said Brodie.

He looked at Jack thoughtfully.

"And another thing, Jack. I've become better acquainted with you to-day than ever before, and I know there's more in you than I ever thought there was."

This was great praise from Brodie Strawn, directed as it was to Jack Lightfoot, whom, heretofore, he had opposed in almost everything.

Two boys in Cranford were more than satisfied that night.

One was Phil Kirtland, who, as leader of the "hounds," had "won the race."

The other was Jack Lightfoot, who, by his cleverness, as well as his heroism, had overcome most of the prejudice which Brodie Strawn had so long held against him.

This was indeed a notable victory for Jack.

A third boy, who perhaps ought to be mentioned somewhat in this connection, was Joel Thornberry.

Joel's name was on the lips of everyone in the town.

"Hoopla!" he said, when he found himself so praised and admired. "It's so powerful nice to be a hero that I don't know but I'll camp down in this here burg and stay a while."

Two very unhappy fellows were the burglars, who found themselves that night in the Cranford jail, with the prospect before them of long terms of imprisonment.

"Prouty," said Sands, speaking to his pal in a savage tone, "I've come to the conclusion that you're a fool!"

"I reckon I am!" said Prouty, hanging his head.

"I've come to the conclusion," said Sands, "that you're the gol-darndest fool that I ever saw!"

"I reckon I am!" said Prouty.

"And we're both fools!"

"Yes, I reckon; about as big fools as ever came down the pike."

THE END.

The baseball season has reached its climax at Cranford, and a couple of hot games must decide the championship. Next week we shall have considerable to say in connection with one of these games, and if you enjoy a good baseball story don't neglect to read No. 34 of ALL-SPORTS, entitled "Jack Lightfoot's Decision; or, The Chestnut of Playing Against Ten Men."

A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

We are hoping that Mr. Stevens will bring Jack up to Canada some time, and get him interested in the sports that are peculiar to Canucks, young and old. I think I saw something a while back in the Chat column, to the effect that he would possibly indulge in snowshoeing and go moose hunting during the coming winter, and possibly that may mean in the wilds of our great country. It would please us more, of course, if one of the boys hailed from here; but, in spite of this defect, we enjoy your weekly more than words can tell. Kindly let me know if I am much out of the way in my measurements. Weight, 121 pounds; height, 5 feet 5 inches; chest, 28 inches, normal; thighs, 20 inches, scant; calves, 14 inches.

JAMES L. McMASTERS.

Montreal, Canada.

We are glad to hear from a Canuck reader, and hope that your present favorable opinion of ALL-SPORTS may continue right along. Mr. Stevens has mapped out his plans for the coming fall and winter, and it would not be at all surprising if Jack and Tom should take a turn in the great Canadian woods while the snow is flying. Your measurements are very good, chest particularly so. Evidently you are a believer in exercise and a lover of outdoor life.

I like baseball about as much as any boy, but a fellow gets enough after a while, and I'll be glad, for one, when Jack and his crowd get to playing good old football. That's the stuff to suit me, and the rougher the game the better. I seem to just glory in a hot scrimmage, when the whole bunch is down in a heap. Then there are some winter sports I'm fond of, too, which I suppose you will take up in their proper season. Your paper is all right, and I guess it would have to be a queer sort of a fellow who couldn't enjoy such a story as Mr. Stevens tells. He's all to the good. Tell him so for me, will you? and at the same time ask him to make 'em longer. I declare, it seems that just when a fellow gets good and interested in a story he reaches the end. Well, I don't want the earth, and I guess I'll stop asking for things. It's a dandy just as it stands, that's so.

Des Moines, Ia.

ROBERT E. COSHING.

Glad you indorse it, Robert. We value the good opinion of every boy, for by making friends, we expect to gain in circulation, until possibly we have outstripped even the pioneer in the field of sports. We have already explained in these columns just why we cannot increase the size of ALL-SPORTS, or publish it more frequently than once a week. And don't you think you are getting a pretty good nickel's worth, as it is?

I want to make a confession right in the start. I've always been opposed to the reading of five-cent publications, partly because, I suppose, it was daily drilled into me that all such cheap stuff must be demoralizing, because my father is a minister, and, then again, on account of seeing the terrific illustrations which appear on the covers of many of these publications,

in which pistols generally are in evidence. By mere accident I came across an old copy of ALL-SPORTS while spending a week up at a camp in Maine. I began reading it in curiosity, finished with growing delight, and made up my mind then and there that while there may be, and probably are, cheap publications that do harm rather than good, ALL-SPORTS is certainly not in that class. When I got home I talked matters over with my father, who looked it through from beginning to end, and then admitted that if all the numbers compared with that particular issue, he would gladly have me continue reading them, and I have now a complete file, from No. 1 down to the last issue, every one of which passed a rigid examination at the hands of a critic who knows what is true and what false in a boy's publication. I am pleased to subscribe myself,

Philadelphia, Pa.

AN ALL-SPORTS ADMIRER.

It is not necessary to add anything to such a letter that speaks so eloquently for itself. We take off our hat to the dominie.

I hereby take the liberty and opportunity of asking your advice concerning my physique. Following are my measurements: Age, 19 years; height, 5 feet 4 inches; weight, 136 pounds; neck, 15 inches; chest, 36 inches; expanded, 38½ inches; biceps, 10 inches; expanded, 12 inches; forearm, 10 inches; wrist, 6½ inches; waist, 29 inches; thigh, 21 inches; calf, 13 inches; ankle, 8 inches. How are they? How can I enlarge my wrists and upper arms? I have a poor sight. How can I improve it? Thanking you in advance, I remain, a true ALL-SPORTS reader,

ARCHIBALD.

You are some fifteen pounds above the average for your height, and your chest is fine. Exercise your wrists and arms. A punching bag will be of assistance, or any regular movement calculated to develop the muscles. About your eyesight, you should consult an oculist. Probably you need glasses. If so, don't let any foolish notion stand in the way, or you will pay dearly later on.

Since your library began coming to my town, it has been a great help to me and my Now or Never boys. We have organized a moral and physical culture club, and I can truthfully say, it has been the means of giving me lots of points in my lectures to my comrades and fellow members. Our club has now about thirty members, and it was only organized June 17, 1905. We have a clubhouse that will soon be under construction; size, thirty by sixty, sixteen-foot walls. It was not as hard for my boys to get a gym as it was for Jack Lightfoot and his boy comrades.

I can never do much in this life for the upbuilding of the next generation, for I am a cripple; a bad one, too, both hips being drawn out of place since 1884. I was only seven years old at the time. So I take this work on my shoulders, asking no reward from my boy friends in starting them on the right road to success in this life and happiness in the world to come. In other words, my club is a reforming club, and anything you can suggest will be more than appreciated. I know you are good people, or you could not send out such good libraries for boys and girls as the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY.

Some of our young readers seem to want to take Mr. Stevens' place and dictate what characters he must use, forgetting that it takes good as well as bad characters to make up a story. So why discuss Mr. Stevens' work, or, in other words, insult him? He surely gives you good reading, so why, as I have said before, insult him?

Our club name is The Now or Never Friendship and Athletic Club. What do you think about it in a general way? I hope to accomplish wonders, before I write again, in this work of leading young men and boys to a better and higher plane of life. Our motto is "Truth and honesty are always the best policy, so be sure you are right and then go ahead," the last being Davy Crockett's watchword.

Excuse my taking up your space, and with a hurrah for Mr.

Stevens, Jack Lightfoot, the publishers, and a warning to all the boy readers to turn to the right road before it is too late, I close—wastebasket, please don't take me—

JOHN R. RAINS,
Professor of The Letter Bang-a-Nule and
• President of the Now or Never Boys.

Ripley, Miss.

We commend your sentiments, friend John. It is evident that your affliction, after all, is a blessing in disguise, since, but for it, you might never have yearned to assist boys along the rough roadway of life. Keep up the good work.

I have read every number of your fine "queen of weeklies"—*Tip Top* is king—from No. 1 to 24, and am waiting for No. 25 to come. I like Jack, Tom and Lufe best; then comes Jerry, Ned, Nat, with his "jiu-jitsu," red-headed Bob, Jube, the "money maker," "long-legged" Wilson, Phil, Brodie, Delancy, Reel and Ben B. Phil would be all right if he would not be so sore at Jack. Ben B. should be kicked off the face of the earth. Of the girls, I like Nellie—dear, modest Nellie. Kate, she is all right, and Lily. Hoping to see this in print, in the "queen of weeklies," I will close, with three cheers for Mr. Stevens and the Winner Company.

I take the liberty to ask a few questions. Age, 13 years 11 months; weight, 89 pounds; chest, 30 inches; expanded, 32½ inches; waist, 26½ inches; arms, 25 inches; hips, 30 inches; calves, 12½ inches; ankles, right, 10 inches; left, 9¾ inches. How are my measurements? My good and bad points? How can I make them all good? Thanking you in advance, I remain,

A TENDERFOOT FROM CHICAGO.

4353 Berkley Avenue.

You neglected to tell us your height, and without that we are all at sea. Write again, and include that important point. We will gladly tell you in what you may be lacking.

I have written to you before about the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, but it is such a good library of stories I could not help but write again. I think they are just fine. The only fault I have to find about them is that the stories are not long enough and do not come often enough. I would be glad to get them twice a week. Jack is a fine model for any boy, and knows his business when it comes to pitching. I should like to hear of Jack taking Miss Nellie Connor out walking some fine Sunday evening. I like Miss Kate Strawn, but like Miss Nellie better. I reckon everyone loves Lufe. He is the kind of a chum to have with you. I would like to hear of Phil Kirtland being one of Jack's best friends. I think he will be all right. Most anyone likes praise. Even Jack likes praise. As for Ben Birkett, his place is in the "pen." Tom Lightfoot is O K. I am something like him, for I dearly love to read. I am a regular bookworm. As for Reel Snodgrass and Delancy Shelton, I would like to "paste" them one each. As we can't get the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY any oftener than once a week, I would like to hear of you starting two or three more libraries. They would sell fine, if they were anywhere close to being as good as ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY. Best wishes to all the boys, the publishers, the editor and the "king of story writers."

Yours respectfully, J. L. BYRUM.

3216 Chamberlain Avenue, East Chattanooga, Tenn.

Thank you, friend J. L. Your letter bears the right stamp, and, believe us, we appreciate such testimony as to the popularity of our weekly. We hope to continue to merit your good opinion. Perhaps we may surprise you some day with something else just as good as ALL-SPORTS.

I have read your valuable publication since the first issue, and I must say it is the most entertaining weekly published for young and old.

It is very true to life, and the characters depicted are very real, indeed, to the interested reader.

Jack is certainly my ideal for a perfect boy; or, at least, as perfect as we can become in this world. Lufe is one of the most natural and best characters in the weekly, and the rest of the boys are all O K, too, with the exception of Kirtland, who seems too selfish and conceited and too self-important for the club.

One thing I don't like to see is the opinion against jiu-jitsu,

which so many readers seem to have, as I have found it all that the Japs claim it to be, and a very good means of defense against toughs, where one who was a boxer would have been down and out without knowledge of the Japanese art.

So just give it a good trial, readers, before condemning it, and don't expect to master it in a few weeks.

Now I am not finding fault with the author's work, but I would like to make a suggestion, as many others have done before, viz., that Jack's nine meet with a couple of defeats and have their dose of hard luck, like other teams. This would be very much more natural than for his team to win every time, as it has been doing lately, and would perhaps give other teams a little chance of crowing somewhat louder.

Will you kindly tell me how my measurements are—good or bad—and I'll quit? Age, 19 years; weight, 122 pounds; height, 5 feet 7 inches; chest, uninflated, 32 inches; inflated, 35½ inches; right arm, 12¾ inches; left, 12½ inches; calves, 14½ inches; thighs, 22 inches, and girth, 31 inches.

Hoping to see this in your valuable weekly, with best wishes to Mr. Stevens, publishers and editor, I am, yours sincerely,

L. HARRISON CRAMER.

163 St. Nicholas Avenue, New York City.

By this time you will have seen that the Cranford boys did get some hard knocks, and had to fight hard at the end of the season to come out ahead. Trust Mr. Stevens for doing the right thing. What he does not know about boys is hardly worth knowing. Your weight is about the right thing for an athlete of your height. Your chest, though, at normal, should measure over thirty-five inches, so you would do well to build it up. Otherwise, you are fairly in line. But the chest is most important of all; so get to work and gain several inches.

Walking into a news stand the other day, I was somewhat surprised to see a copy of the ALL-SPORTS, and to see, on further investigation, that the hero's name was the same as mine—Lightfoot. Tom Lightfoot is a familiar name with me, as my father and brother are named Tom. I bought several copies of your interesting weekly, and have been reading all the back numbers I could get hold of. It is needless to say that I enjoy reading the adventures of Jack and his friends. If any of the readers of this weekly should like to correspond with a Lightfoot, I shall be more than glad to hear from them, and I assure you that all letters will be answered. I am a boy sixteen years of age. With best wishes to every reader of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, and with best regard to Jack and Tom,

576 Browder Street, Dallas, Tex.

B. L. LIGHTFOOT.

Quite a coincidence, but we are glad you find ALL-SPORTS interesting, and that your namesake does you credit. We rather think the Lightfoots are a fine family all around.

I have been reading over some of the letters in back numbers, and mighty interesting they are, too. I have no sympathy with fellows who think they know how a story should be written better than the author does. Why don't they turn in and try their hand? There's big money in the game. The truth is, they don't know the first secret of writing. Now, my opinion is, that when a fellow finds occasion to growl at the stories he'd better get down and out for keeps. The very fact that these fellows all admit they just couldn't "keep house" without a weekly visit from ALL-SPORTS tells the story. Mr. Editor, they are simply "talking through their hat." They just want to attract attention to themselves. It's a common practice. The kicker takes the center of the stage, and spouts in the lime light, while the nine hundred and ninety-nine who enjoy the story every week without saying anything are never heard from. From my friends who read your interesting paper weekly, not only here, but in other places as well, as their letters prove, I've heard nothing but words of praise. They fill the bill to a dot, and every boy who reads of Jack and his doings is laying a foundation for becoming a better man than he would otherwise have been. "Them's my sentiments."

CHARLES J. HOWELL,

President Falls City Correspondence Club.

Louisville, Ky.

Friend Charles, you evidently know what you are writing about, and ALL-SPORTS is indeed fortunate in having so valiant a defender. We thank you sincerely.

HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes, in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Just at present baseball is the topic in hand, and instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 14, "How to Become a Batter." No. 15, "The Science of Place Hitting and Bunting." No. 16, "How to Cover First Base." No. 17, "Playing Shortstop." No. 18, "Pitching." No. 19, "Pitching Curves." No. 20, "The Pitcher's Team Work." No. 21, "Playing Second Base." No. 22, "Covering Third Base." No. 23, "Playing the Outfield." No. 24, "How to Catch." (I.) No. 25, "How to Catch." (II.) No. 26, "How to Run Bases." No. 27, "Coaching and the Coach." No. 28, "How to Umpire." No. 29, "How to Manage Players." No. 30, "Baseball Points." No. 31, "How to Make a Cheap Skiff." No. 32, "Archery."

CROSS-COUNTRY RUNNING.

The fall of the year, when the woods are a mass of brown and green and gold, and the air laden with the pungent scent of the pines, while the first crisp breath of approaching winter sends the blood tingling to our cheeks, is very well suited for long runs through forest and over field, meadows and country roads. The practice of cross-country running for a couple of months in the fall will do a great deal toward making you strong, giving you endurance, and building up a pair of sound, healthy lungs.

One of the most common and pleasant forms of cross-country running is the game of "hare and hounds," in which two runners, the "hares," start several minutes in advance of the general crowd of runners, called the "hounds," dropping bits of paper behind them, which enable the "hounds" to track them and follow in pursuit.

No one should ever enter this game unless he is already fairly strong, and able to run several miles without straining himself. If you are not especially strong, I would advise you to first take part in light, active games out of doors until you are sufficiently vigorous to stand the strain of the run without discomfort.

Cross-country running, however, is one of the very best methods of building up the strength, lung capacity, endurance and vitality necessary for other strenuous track and field sports.

While the runners in college and athletic clubs usually go over a course of from six to ten miles, yet I would not advise any of my boy readers to attempt such distances. Two or three miles should be enough for any boy in good, sound condition; but, when starting out, it would be better to run only a half mile or a mile at a time, then gradually increase the distance as your endurance improves and you gain strength. Always remember never to strain yourself too much, and if you get out of breath, or exhausted, stop immediately.

At your first attempt some of you may not be able to go more than a quarter of a mile; but if you try it again

the next day, you will be able to run a little further, and soon you will be able to do a half mile, then a mile, and finally, two or three miles. Do not start out with a fast gait. If you do, you will be all tired out when you have gone a couple of hundred yards. Begin your run slowly.

If not accustomed to running long distances, you will become quite short of breath when you have covered three hundred yards or more, and will feel like quitting. But if, at this point, you have courage enough to continue, and do not try to run too fast, you will find, after running a little further, that your "second wind" will come to you.

Run on the toes, or the balls of the foot, as much as you can. Running on the heels will jar the nervous system too much. No one can run as well on the heels as on his toes.

After some practice, when you have become strong enough to keep this pace up for two or three miles, you will find it a great source of pleasure to run across the fields and meadows, up hill and down, breathing the pure, fresh air of the country, all of which will make you feel how good it is to be alive and well and strong. You will also acquire the very best of health from these cross-country runs; the enforced breathing tends to develop your lungs, and you will soon be the possessor of a pair of strong, shapely legs that you may well be proud of.

There are books on the market, published by such a responsible house as the Spaldings, that will give you the few rules necessary to the game. This article is not written with any such intention, but to hold up before you the pleasure and profit to be derived from such healthy outdoor sport.

The trouble with us, in the past, as a nation, has been that both young men and old men were so saturated with the idea of making money that we failed to indulge in the vigorous recreations that for many years have made our English cousins so red-cheeked and healthy.

This, luckily, is changing more and more every year. The Saturday half holiday has become a settled institution, and through the influence of colleges, and the reading of such publications as ALL-SPORTS, devoted to clean athletics, our American boys are rapidly forging to the front in all departments of outdoor sports.

As we have said before in this article, one must take care not to overdo this running. Too much of a good thing is as bad as too little. With their usual enthusiasm, our boys are apt to plunge headlong into anything that appeals to their fancy. They play too vigorously, and hence fail to get the full benefit of the exercise. Some baseball games contain so much nerve-racking excitement as might fall to the lot of a soldier in his first fierce battle; what with the shrieks of players and spectators, the tension of bold plays and a close score, the bulldozing of the wretched umpire, and the wild delight over the victory won.

That is all wrong. The intense mental excitement brings about a strain that counteracts the benefit to be received from an afternoon in the open air.

In cross-country running, and such games as "hare and hounds," there is little element of excitement to wear upon the nerves, and if the runners are in fair condition at the start, and take care not to overdo matters, they must necessarily receive great and lasting benefit from the exercise.

THE RED RAVEN LIBRARY

THRILLING SEA STORIES

This library represents an entirely new idea. It is totally different from any other now published. The stories detail the adventures of three plucky lads who set out to capture the notorious Captain Kidd. Every real boy has longed to read more about the doings of this bold marauder of the seas and the opportunity is now given them.

The stories are of generous length and without equals in thrilling adventure and interest. The best sea stories ever written.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 4—Defying the Sea Wolf; or, Thad at Bay in the Powder Magazine. | 22—Tiger of the Sea; or, The Three Castaways of the Gulf. |
| 5—The Jolly <i>Red Raven</i> ; or, Capt. Kidd's Daring Raid on Old New York. | 23—The Pirates of The Keys; or, Our Boys Afloat on the Spanish Main. |
| 6—The Corsair Captain; or, Thad and His Chums Afloat. | 24—Capt. Kidd at Bay; or, Marooned On a Sand-Spit. |
| 7—The Death's Head Rovers; or, How Thad Outwitted the Coast Freebooters. | 25—The Silver Barque; or, Capt. Kidd's Last Prize. |
| 8—Walking the Plank; or, The Last Cruise of the <i>Flying-Scud</i> . | 26—Among the Buccaneers; or, Thad and His Chums in Desperate Straits. |
| 9—Capt. Kidd's Revenge; or, Thad Among the Tigers of the Sea. | 27—The Red Scourge; or, How Morgan, the Buccaneer, Stormed the Citadel. |
| 10—The Chest of Doubloons; or, How Three Boys Defied the Buccaneers. | 28—The Chase of the Slaver; or, Thad Among the Indigo Planters. |
| 11—The Rival Pirates; or, Thad and His Chums in Irons. | 29—Morgan's Coast Raiders; or, Thad at the Sacking of Maracaibo. |
| 12—Capt. Kidd's Stratagem; or, Simple Simon Takes Soundings. | 30—The Buccaneer's Ghost; or Thad's Adventures with the Pearl Divers. |
| 13—The <i>Red Raven's</i> Prize; or, How Young Thad Sailed a Pirate Barque. | 31—The Sea Cat; or, How Our Boys Held the Fort. |
| 14—Nailed to the Mast; or, The Last of Capt. Kidd's "Hole in the Wall." | 32—The Phantom Galleon; or, Thad's Adventures Along the Isthmus. |
| 15—Capt. Kidd's Long Chase; or, Thad and His Chums in the Tropics. | 33—A Blue Water Free-Lance; or, Thad Adrift in a Leaking Pinnacle. |
| 16—Set Adrift by Pirates; or, Thad's Adventures in the Saragossa Sea. | 34—A Corsair of the Carribees; or, The Unlucky Silver "Pieces of Eight." |
| 17—To Sink or Swim; or, Thad and His Friends On Blue Water. | 35—On Pirate Island; or, The Battle of the Rival Sea Wolves. |
| 18—Capt. Kidd's Drag-Net; or, How Young Thad Hoodwinked the Buccaneers. | 36—In Tropic Seas; or, Thad's Strange Adventures at Hispaniola. |
| 19—The Phantom Pirate; or, Thad and His Chums on the Haunted Ship. | 37—The Specter Brig; or, Our Boys Afloat on a Raft. |
| 20—The Winged Witch; or, How Three Boys Saved the Treasure Galleon. | 38—The Young Marooners; or, What Thad Found on Treasure Island. |
| 21—Capt. Kidd in New Orleans; or, The Pirate Scourge of the Rigolets. | |
-

PRICE, FIVE CENTS.

: : : For Sale by all Newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, upon receipt of price by publishers : : :

WINNER LIBRARY CO., 165 West Fifteenth St., NEW YORK